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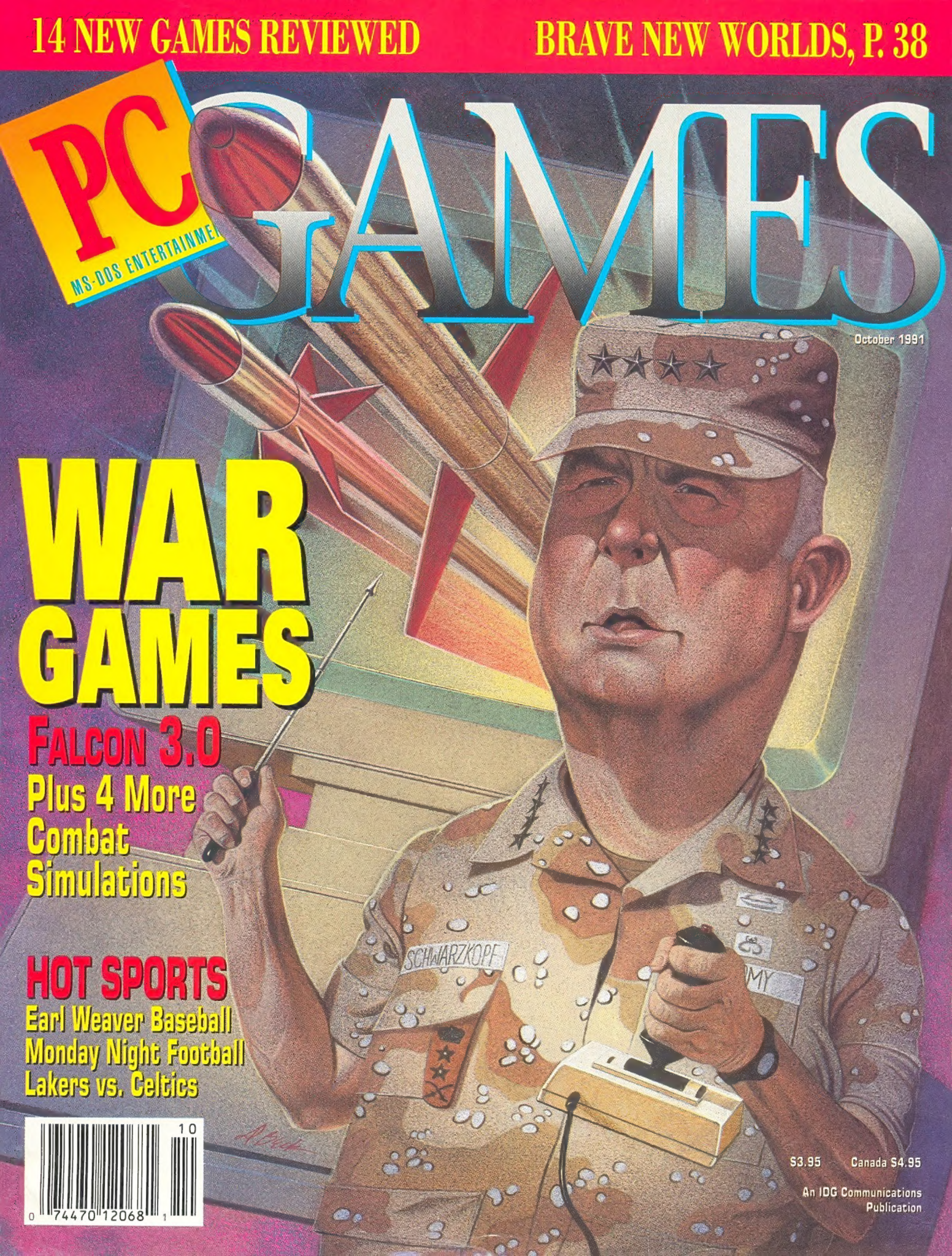

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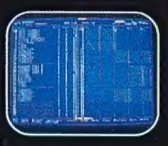

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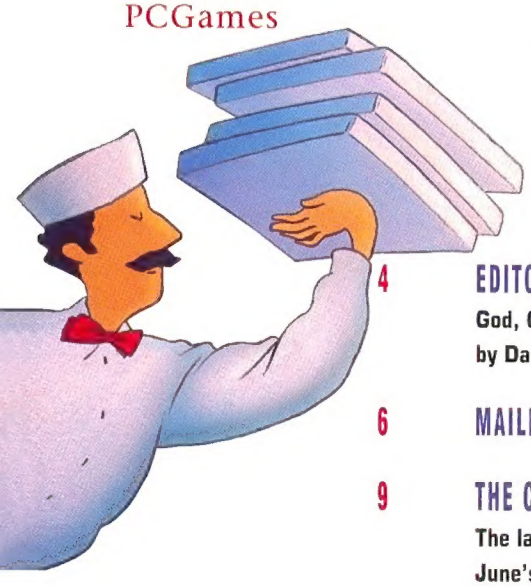

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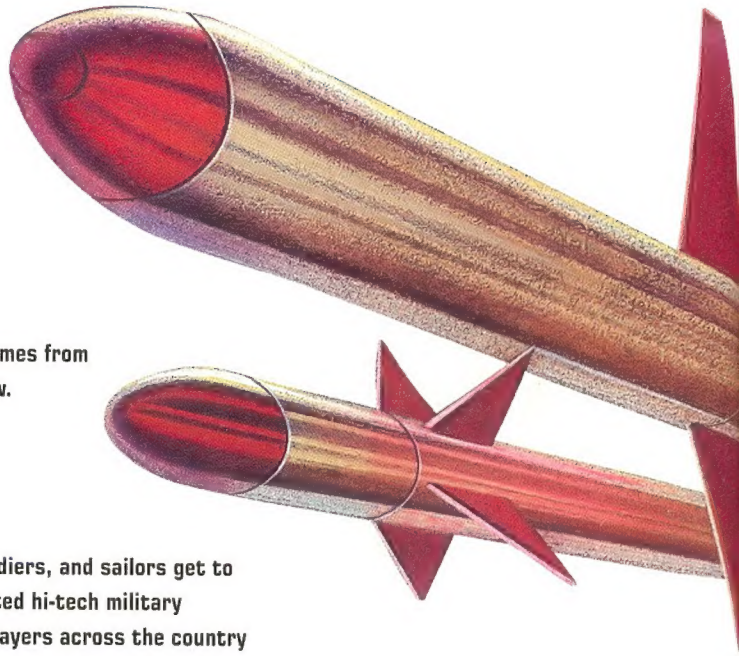

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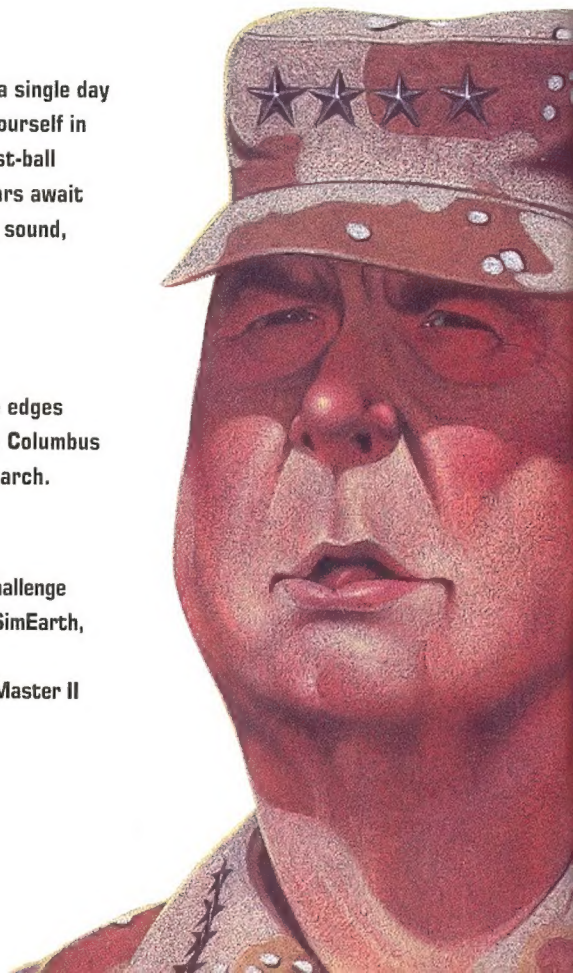

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EDITOR'S PAGE

GOD, GUTS, AND JOYSTICKS

This month's lead story is titled "War in the Modern World." To be honest, we have mixed emotions about it. Our cover caricature of Norman Schwarzkopf could be taken the wrong way by someone whose loved one was involved in the Gulf War or by someone who thought we just never should have been there to begin with. We're not warmongers. In fact, we find nothing fun or funny about war. Rest assured that had the Gulf War lasted until now, we would never have produced a story on modern war games.

Still, we make our living by "giving the people what they want." And studies and sales figures prove that PC gamers want to play war. Long before PCs, war games flourished on paper, boards, and screens. Just ask John Wayne (don't expect an answer) or Alan Alda about TV and movie viewers' fascination with war. The success of war-related software is nothing new. But somehow there's something different about it. Maybe computer military simulations offer too much realism for some people.

So why do people play war games? The sophistication of today's computer software will take your breath away (figuratively speaking). While we don't think of ourselves as destructive types, the lure of sitting in the cockpit of an F-16 and getting a taste of the challenges real pilots face is too compelling to pass up. If you don't appreciate the talents of fighter pilots, playing something like Spectrum Holobyte's Falcon 3.0 is a humbling experience. Today's computer-game players, in general, aren't hawks who spend their days and nights imagining how to exterminate commies, à la Frank Burns in the television show *M*A*S*H*. Rather, they're curious, adventurous sorts who use the power of today's computers to try things they never could otherwise.

It's not just war games, either. How many of us could get behind the wheel of Mario Andretti's or Bill Elliot's race car? Or really want to know what it feels like to be blindsided by Lawrence Taylor? Okay, a few sickies might, but the majority of us are just curious.

Today's games also let us do things our real-world skills won't let us. For example, I couldn't hit a golf ball 260 yards, at least not in a straight line, in a thousand tries; with today's golf simulations, though, I can achieve something close to perfection in only a relatively short time. Still, I know I'll never come close to qualifying for the PGA tour. Similarly, if you actually tried to fly an F-16 . . . well, imagine your own scenario. It's probably almost as messy as me playing golf at Pebble Beach. We like to think that game players don't really want to drop bombs on small countries. Rather, they want to taste the danger and excitement only a few specially trained individuals ever actually experience.

So if you saw this month's cover and said, "Those people at *PCGames* are war-loving maniacs with the sensitivity of Archie Bunker," you're mistaken. We're only helping thousands of people get a small taste of military technology. Then again, maybe *you're* one of those commie types. You can't be too sure, you know.

— Dan Muse, Editor in Chief

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(800) 441-4403

Associate Publisher/National Sales Manager ..... Dale Strang
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Advertising Coordinator ..... Mary Hartwell
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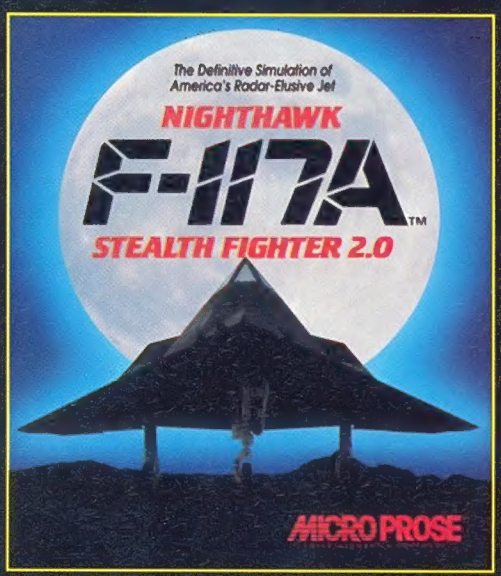

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MAILBAG

Lost Trilogy

In the Editor's Page column of the March/April issue (p. 4), Dan Muse made a reference to the **Zork** trilogy of adventure games. My hopes soared. Being relatively new to computer games, I had just stumbled across a version of Zork. I was hooked. For days and nights I mapped the world and pondered the puzzles until at last I completed the adventure.

So what's my problem? I can't find anyone who sells the second and third installments of the Zork trilogy. If you, or any of your readers, can direct me to where I might purchase Zork II and III for my IBM compatible, I'd be forever indebted. Thanks for your assistance and keep up the good work!

Steven Gasta
#11123
345 Buckland Hills Drive
Manchester, CT 06040

The Zork Trilogy was manufactured by Mediagenic, but the company has discontinued it. You may be able to track it down, though, by contacting a mail-order house or your local user group. Check with your dealer if you need help locating either source. — eds.

On-Line Diplomacy

I've been searching for a computerized version of what I think is the greatest war game ever made. But to my disappointment, I've not been able to find a company that sells it. In "Dial F For Fun, P For Play: On-Line Multiplayer Games" (March/April 1991, p. 28), though, I finally found a reference to it — **Diplomacy** is the game.

Does a floppy-disk version of this classic board game exist? And, if so, where can I get it? If this game isn't on the market, someone should jump all over the opportunity of bringing it to PC users. It's absolutely the best game I've ever played.

Ricky F. Hadden
1528-E Tang Court
Key West, FL 33040

The only way we know to play Diplomacy is through on-line services such as CompuServe and GEnie. That means you need a computer and a modem, and you need to pay some membership and operating fees. Once you pay a membership fee you can play this game (and others), with other people who also belong to the service.

CompuServe's membership kit costs $39.95 (you get a $15 credit, too), and you're charged $12 an hour to use it. Contact CompuServe at 5000 Arlington Centre Blvd., Columbus, OH 43220, (800) 848-8199. GEnie's monthly charge is $4.95; its non-prime-time charge is $6 an hour; and its prime-time charge is $18 an hour. Contact GEnie at 401 North Washington Street, Rockville, MD 20850, (800) 638-9636. — eds.

Hunting for Aliens

I'm writing you as a last resort. I've been trying to locate **Aliens: The Computer Game**. It's based on the Sigourney Weaver movie series *Aliens* and *Alien*. I saw the game listed last in a West Coast software catalog in 1985. I'd appreciate any information.

James S. May
2044 South Sixth Street
Arlington, VA 22204

You're having trouble locating Aliens: The Computer Game, because Mediagenic no longer manufactures it. Your local user group or a mail-order house may be able to help you. Ask your dealer how to get in touch with them. — eds.

Deal Me In

In an article in the January/February 1991 issue titled "In the Cards" (p. 36) you mention a variety of computer card games for playing poker, blackjack, gin, cribbage, and solitaire. Do any exist for playing backgammon? I'd appreciate any information that provides titles and mentions the quality of the games.

A. Anderl
c/o Annette Dukett
P.O. Box 361
Loami, IL 62661

We're sorry to say that we don't know any company that has a backgammon game in the works. Perhaps our readers could recommend an old favorite, though. How about it, folks? Let's hear from you. — eds.

Seeing Red

I'm an avid *PCGames* reader who is continuously smacked in the face by the stereotypical "man's world" of computer gaming. Why in most adventure games must I save some scantily clad damsel in distress? And why must I encounter sexist advertisements as I flip through the magazine's pages? Although these tactics may turn on some gamers, it turns the rest of us off.

C.L. Barker
P.O. Box 148
Hillsboro, NH 03244

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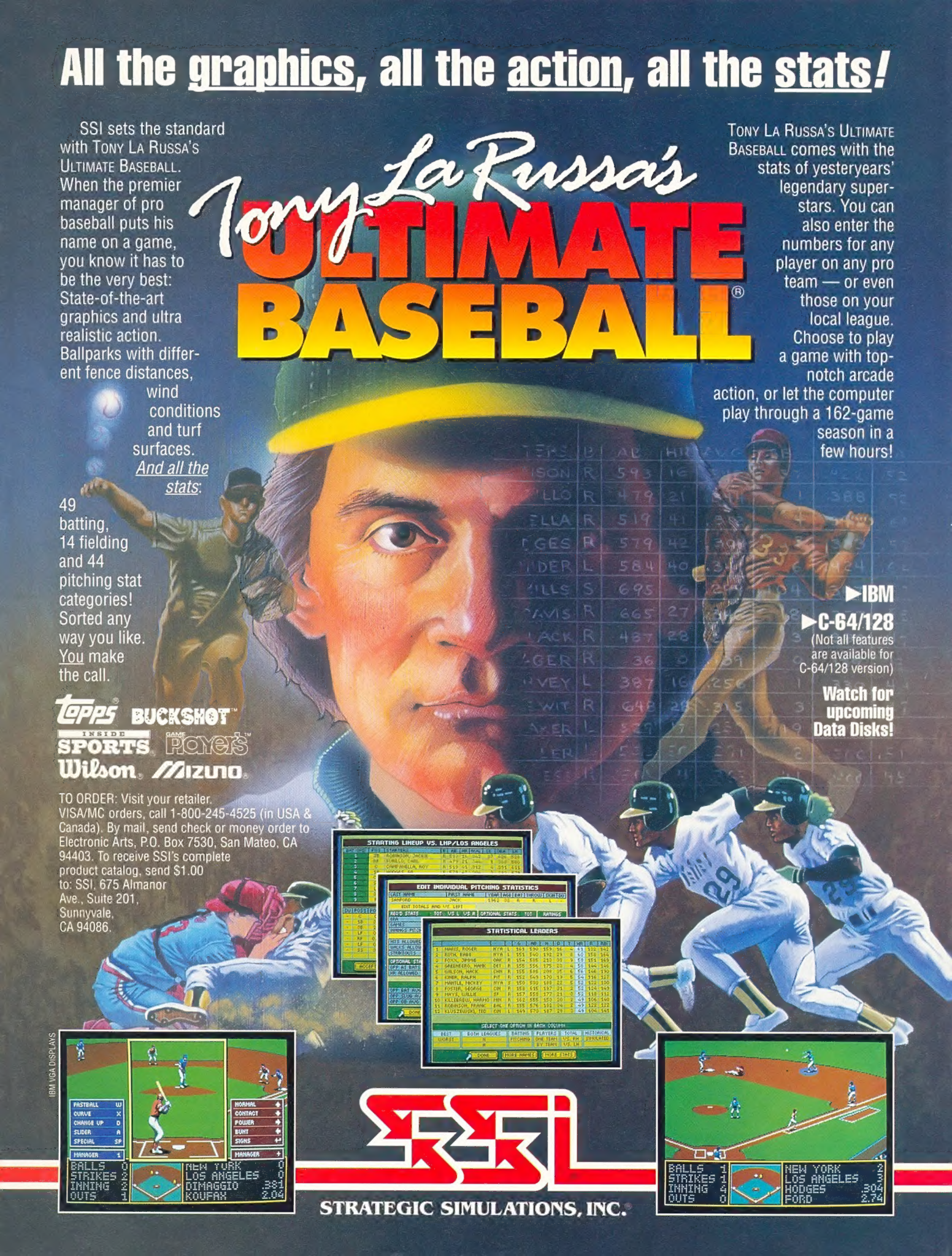

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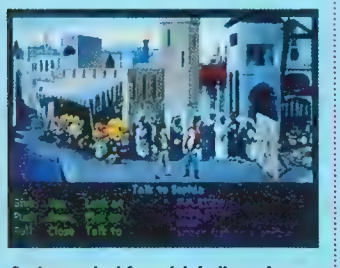
THE CES REPORT

Indy vs. the Evil Ghost Pirate

Indiana Jones and the Fate of Atlantis ($59.95) is an exciting worldwide race to find and unlock the potent magic of Atlantis before the Third Reich unleashes the Lost City's power for evil. This graphics adventure is the largest, most complex yet, according to Lucasfilm Games



Action-packed fun with Indiana Jones.

(San Rafael, CA). It features more than 200 rooms and 100 pieces of original art. Based on players' choices and playing styles, the game can send you down any of three distinct pathways, emphasizing dramatic character interaction, classical puzzle solving, or action-oriented game play. Many puzzles have alternative solutions and some puzzles change from game to game. No, there's no new Indy film in the works, but you never know.

✔ Okay, give it up, Monkey Island diehards! You got rid of the evil ghost pirate, LeChuck, with an agitated bottle of root beer. Now, get ready for **Monkey Island II: Le Chuck's Revenge** ($59.95). You'll find that carbonated beverages, though initally destructive, actually put the fizzle back in the phantom. LeChuck returns and he's really p.o.'d. Guybrush must find the missing map pieces and then the treasure, which will tell him how to dematerialize LeChuck permanently. LeChuck's Revenge features the same broad-stroke humor and some of the same characters, but there's a new crew of a grog-guzzling characters, too. The game has three skill levels, each featuring different puzzles; all puzzles change from game to game. A nice addition to the point-and-click interface is the software's icon inventory, which really speeds up game play. LeChuck's back, he's mad, he's bad, he's funny. For more information, call Lucasfilm Games at (415) 721-3334. — **W.N.**

LeChuck's back in Monkey Island II — and boy is he mad.

Accolade: A Witch, a Bear, and a Nerd

The Mistress of the Dark is back to bewitch your PC. **Elvira II: The Jaws of Cerberus** ($59.95) finds the alluring Elvira held hostage by a giant three-headed demon dog in a Hollywood film studio. Like Accolade's (San Jose, CA) previous

The Mistress of the Dark returns.

Elvira game, this one's no laughing matter as you use real-time combat and magic spells to fend off all manner of monsters. The graphics images are horrific and ghoulish. Elvira's gorgeous, of course — and the program's not bad, either.

✔ Accolade's got still another celebrity of sorts in its fold. **Mike Ditka Power Football** ($54.95) features teams from all 28 NFL cities. Teams come with complete player rosters, but you can edit names, numbers, and vital characteristics (speed, skill, and strength). You get 80 plays, but you can design your own, too. You control every player on your team with four views of the on-field action — behind

Mike Ditka Power Football

the offense, behind the defense, and from either sideline. Like Coach Ditka himself, this game's hard-nosed and entertaining.

✔ You may think Les Manley is, well, less manly, but he usually gets the job done. **Les Manley in Lost in L.A.** ($59.95) finds our hero investigating a string of celebrity kidnappings in various Southern California hot spots, such as Hollywood and Rodeo Drive. The game play's a little smoother this time around: A new point-and-click interface lets you play without typing in text.

Graphics images are jazzed up with scaling and continuous scrolling, and the game sports digitized photos of real-life actors, models, and California locales. For more information, contact Accolade at (408) 985-1700. — **W.N.**

Koei Goes West

With three new products this season, Koei (Burlingame, CA) shifts the focus of its historical strategy games from Asia to the West.

✔ **L'Empereur** enables you to live the life of Napoleon as he rises through the ranks of the French Army. You'll march across 18th-century Europe and the Near East until you reach, yes, Waterloo. Can you change history?

✔ **Liberty or Death** is Koei's first strategy game based on American history. You get to start the American Revolution — or stop it. Take the side of the British under Cornwallis or the colonists under Washington as you manage all aspects of military command — organizing your troops, obtaining funding to build forts and ships, manufacturing weapons, and gathering supplies. When the battle begins, you'll lead bayonet charges, night attacks, and roadside ambushes.

✔ **Uncharted Waters** is a seafaring role-play adventure that drops you onto the dangerous high seas of the 16th century. You're a pretty good sailor, but not good enough to marry the princess. Fame and wealth are the ticket, so you sail around the world to make a fortune in profitable trading. When times are tough, resort to piracy and gambling. You'll also recruit able seamen and acquire navigational instruments to guide you on your travels. Stop off in foreign ports and use whatever means necessary to get the information that will lead you to untold riches. For details, call Koei at (415) 348-0200. — **W.N.**

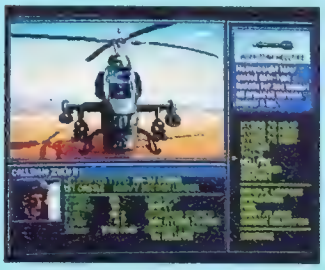
F-117A Stealth Fighter 2.0 takes you into harrowing combat.

MicroProse's Wild Blue Yonder

MicroProse (Hunt Valley, MD) is beefing up its squadron of high-flying flight simulators with two new action-packed games this fall.

F-117A Stealth Fighter 2.0 ($69.95) promises to take PC pilots through harrowing combat. An improved mission-generation system soups up enemy artificial intelligence. Players fly in nine campaigns. Six are improved versions of missions from F-19 Stealth Fighter and F-15 Strike Eagle; the three new scenarios are Columbia/Panama, northern Japan, and Iraq. (Keep an eye open for new mission disks for F-117A, as well.) Graphics enhancements in this game include sharply detailed cockpit and in-plane graphics, nighttime skylines with special night HUD (heads-up display) features, and graduated horizons, landscapes, and seascapes. A replay option lets you review your best aerial maneuvers.

✔ Remember Gunship? That was a tough helicopter combat simulator, even for keyboard fliers. **Gunship 2000** ($69.95) builds on that hard-flying tradition. Gamers can fly up to three types of military choppers from a fleet of seven. You'll choose five missions from a list of hundreds in the Persian Gulf and Central Europe — air-to-air combat as well as close-support fighting and single- and multiple-helicopter missions. A campaign-map feature displays the overall ebb and flow of battle, while a mission builder lets you design your own challenge. For more information, you can reach MicroProse at (301) 771-1151. — **W.N.**



Gunship 2000: A flying tradition.

Origin's Latest

Origin Systems (Austin, TX) can never program enough Ultimas. **Ultima VII: The Black Gate** ($79.95) is a combination sword-and-sorcery tale, murder mystery, and horror thriller, delivering the first chapter of book three in the Ultima saga. You, the Avatar, receive a mysterious and taunting message from a powerful malevolent entity who threatens Britannia. It's been 200 years since your last visit; society's crumbling and the kingdom's decaying. On top of that, a wave of gruesome murders is sweeping the townships. Your job is to discover who — or what — the culprit is. Installment VII features an all-new version of the Ultima role-playing system, with a full-screen view, an easier interface, and digitized speech. Origin's even voluntarily rated the game for mature players, owing to graphic imagery and some violence.

✔ **Strike Commander** ($79.95) promises to take Origin's "interactive movie" game system (pioneered by Wing Commander) to new heights. In this superb flight simulator/adventure game, you play a mercenary pilot in the year 2007. The Petro Wars have shat-

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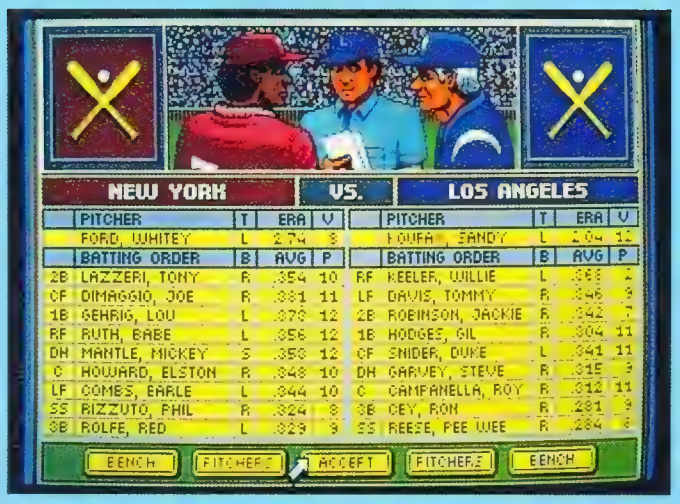
tered the world's oil-based economy. The U.S. is a fragmented shell of its former self, with individual states running their own shows. Japan, OPEC, and the Multinationals Corporation control the world. You fly six different fighters, including World War I biplanes, P-38s, and F-15s, through 20 missions; the enemy has 20 types of aircraft in its armada. There's a fine line between right and wrong, profit and loss — and you're on it! The program features Origin's RealSpace graphics environment, which utilizes real-time bit-mapped images, texture-mapped polygons, fractal terrains, and atmospheric hazing. That means your 256-color VGA graphics images look great. For more information, contact Origin Systems at (512) 328-5490. — **W.N.**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3B ROLFE, RED L .329 9
RF KEELER, WILLIE L .341 7
LF DAVIS, TOMMY R .346 9
2B ROBINSON, JACKIE R .342 7
1B HODGES, GIL R .304 11
CF SNIDER, DUKE L .341 11
DH GARVEY, STEVE R .315 9
C CAMPANELLA, ROY R .312 11
3B CEY, RON R .281 9
SS REESE, PEE WEE R .284 8
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Tony LaRussa's Ultimate Baseball sports statistics-based and interactive play.

A New Twist on Tris

Tetris, Welltris, Faces — what could be next in Spectrum HoloByte's (Alameda, CA) Soviet Tris series? It's Wordtris — a cross between Tetris and Scrabble. The object is to manipulate tiles as they fall from the top of the computer screen. Each tile shows a letter, and your job is to match the falling letters to form words. Once complete, the word is removed from the playing area and the game awards you points. The score for each word is based on the number of letters in it, the difficulty level at which you're playing (regular or advanced), and the complexity of the word.

As with other games in the Tris series, timing is everything. You must find a strategic spot for a letter quickly before it reaches the bottom of the playing area. Where it lands it stays. When tiles pile up and reach the top of the playing area, the game is over.

The well into which the tiles fall is half-filled with water. When a letter lands it floats to the water line until another one lands on top of it and plunges it below the surface. This feature offers greater flexibility in planning your strategy for creating words. It also keeps letters from simply falling to the bottom of the well where they become just about unusable. It also makes the game more challenging, though, because the water line means there's a shorter distance for each letter to fall.

Two other interesting features in Wordtris are Repeat Words and Next Tile. The first restricts the number of times you can form a particular word. The latter displays the next letter before it falls onto the screen. The game includes a 30,000-word dictionary; you can also create custom words.

Wordtris retails for $39.95. For more information, contact Spectrum HoloByte at (415) 522-3584. — D.M.

SSI Plays Ball

Strategic Simulations, Inc. (SSI, Sunnyvale, CA) has entered another strange and wonderful world — baseball. To help manage the company's first sports simulation, the folks at SSI have recruited Oakland A's manager Tony La Russa. **Tony La Russa's Ultimate Baseball** ($49.95) features statistics-based and interactive game play. This 5-megabyte program was developed by Don Daglow of Beyond Software, who was part of the original Earl Weaver Baseball development team.

At press time, S.S.I. was still negotiating with the major leagues for the right to use names and numbers of current professional players, but at any rate the game will model its players after real-life ones. A team of baseball legends, including Lou Gehrig, Jackie Robinson, and Sandy Koufax, is built into the game. SSI also plans to produce data disks, which will contain the rosters of 26 major-league teams from specific years past to present. Another disk contains simulations of the 26 major-league ballparks. Each player is rated in 49 batting statistics, 14 fielding stats, and, when appropriate, 44 pitching stats. The game even models clutch-hitting percentages, player streaks, and chances for injury.

In interactive mode you control your individual team members' pitching, batting, and on-field defense. You can also just play manager and let the players do their thing. Or you can tinker with a team — add Bob Gibson and Don Drysdale to Roger Clemens' Red Sox, say, and then let the computer play a 162-game season. (According to SSI, that takes a 33MHz 386 just under an hour.) You'll get stats for all players and all 26 teams.

✔ Don't worry, role-play fans, SSI isn't escaping unreality yet — **Eye of the Beholder II: Legend of Dark Moon** continues the saga of the great Legend series. And then there's **Pools of Darkness**, the fourth and final chapter in the Pools of Radiance series. Your characters can reach 25th-level powers, but the monsters likewise get near-godlike powers. For more information, call SSI at (408) 737-6800. — **W.N.**

Let's Get Small

Maxis (Orinda, CA) took its SimCity concept to the macro level with SimEarth. Now it's gone micro with — **SimAnt**. SimAnt puts you in charge of a black-ant colony, out to conquer a suburban backyard. You control one ant directly, but

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You'll travel through the dark and mysterious Forest of Fangorn, over treacherous mountain passes, past the great fortress cave complex, through the ghastly marsh of the eternal spirits and, ultimately, come face to face with the mysterious two towers.

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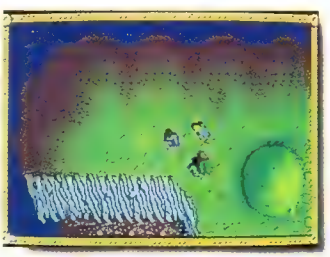

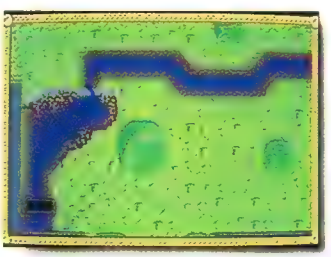

MS-DOS Screens Pictured.

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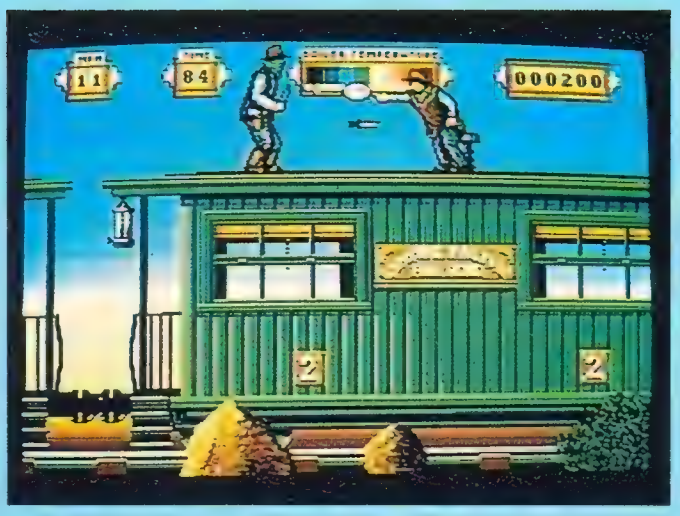
you can manipulate the behavior of your colony to overcome the rival red ants, a hungry spider, and a boy and his dog to reach your goal — the house, with its abundant food supply (especially the refrigerator). You can make the queen produce workers or soldiers, dig tunnels, raid red-ant nests, and swarm. You can even play the spider and wreak insect-sized havoc on the reds.

It's not as "Sim-ple" as it sounds. SimAnt designers Will Wright and Justin McCormick drew on the Pulitzer Prize-winning book *The Ants*, by Harvard University biologists Bert Holldobler and E.O. Wilson for accurate scientific information on ant behavior. Studying behavior in simple life forms, Maxis says, will give gamers a better understanding of basic artificial intelligence and artificial life. SimAnt's due out for the PC some time in October. For more information, contact Maxis at (415) 254-9700. — **W.N.**

Only 17?

Konami (Buffalo Grove, IL) wins the award for most new games announced at CES with a staggering lineup of 17 new titles — and the scope of this Herculean software effort ranges from Bart Simpson to J.R.R. Tolkien.

✔ Given the success of The Simpsons and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, it's no surprise that these trend-setting types would make the move from TV and movie screens to the computer screen. First, for



Experience a taste of the Old West in Back to the Future III.

arcade aficionados, there's **The Simpsons' Arcade** ($49.95) and **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Arcade Game** ($49.95), MS-DOS renderings of the coin-operated versions. In The Simpsons' Arcade, thieves kidnap young Maggie, and Bart, Homer, and Marge must rescue her, using unique weapons such as a jump rope and a vacuum cleaner. The Turtles face fire, snow storms, and other obstacles in spectacular Ninja fashion.

✔ **The Simpsons' Adventure** ($49.95) is designed to capture the humor and imagination of the original television series. Meet the whole family as you enter Bart's world. In **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: The Adventure** ($49.95), you search for clues to fight crime in Manhattan. This all-new adventure includes mapping capabilities and 15 missions. You can also assign character attributes. Before you begin your mission, you can hone your Ninja fighting techniques in the training room. Cowabunga, dude.

✔ Konami has also announced a handful of action-packed games based on popular movies. Battle your way out of a totally bad scene in 1995 Los Angeles in **Predator 2** ($19.95). Throw a few pies at Buford Tanner and tackle a speeding train as you and Doc experience a taste of the Old West in **Back to the Future III** ($31.95). Try your hand at dogfighting with F-14s and F-18s in **Top Gun: Head to Head Dogfighting Simulator** ($19.95). The sky's the limit.

✔ From the world of literature, **Riders of the Rohan** ($49.95), based on Tolkien's trilogy, is a strategy war game, with a variety of subplots offering you head-to-head combat experience, as well. Just in case your

Riders of the Rohan: Strategic warfare.

archery and dueling skills aren't up to snuff, you may want to take advantage of practice mode before you challenge the enemy.

✔ For fantasy lovers, there's **Killing Cloud** ($49.95), in which you'll fly through a toxic cloud on your hi-tech hoverbike in pursuit of the Black Angels, who have taken over San Francisco. **Bloodwych** ($39.95) is a fantasy role-playing game in which you exorcise the demon that lies dormant within the Castle

Killing Cloud is for fantasy lovers.

of the Bloodwych. The game also lets two people play simultaneously.

✔ In **Champions** ($59.95), more than a dozen storylines incorporate a whole slew of convoluted subplots. This role-playing game also offers combat sequences based on a character's attributes — not your reflexes. You can even customize the game's animation as well as its characters.

✔ Now for a blast from TV's past: Your **Mission: Impossible** ($49.95), should you decide to accept it, is to assemble a party of agents with skills in using computers, tapping wires, finding hidden microphones, creating disguises, picking locks, and installing bugs to help you investigate a series of fatal "accidents" involving key political figures.

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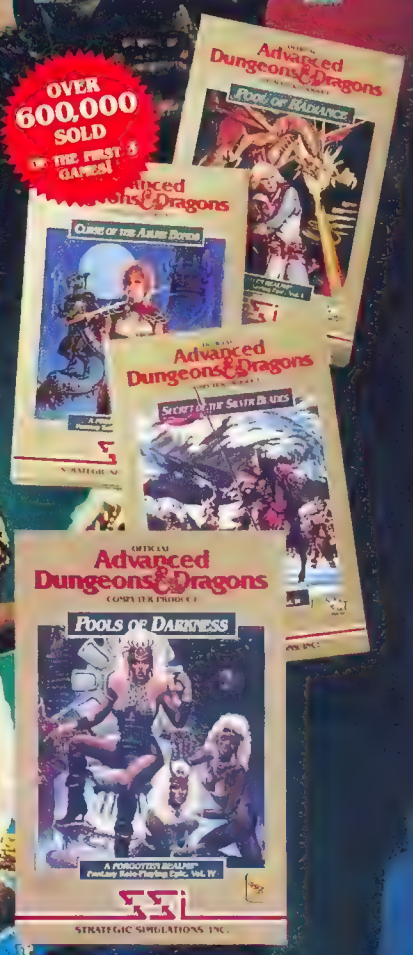
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First there was *Pool of Radiance*. Next came *Curse of the Azure Bonds*. Then followed *Secret of the Silver Blades*. Together these incredible games have sold more than *600,000* copies so far!

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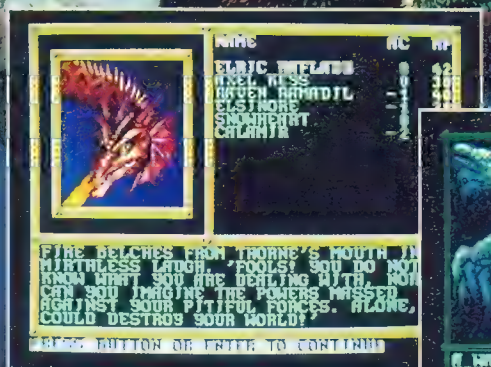
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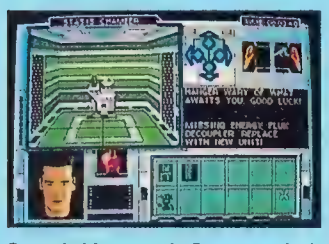
✔ In **Spacewrecked** ($49.95), you and a fleet of 20 biological-survey ships are stranded in space in the year 2195. Aliens from the specimen lab have taken over the ship and your crew members have either gone mad or are locked in cryogenic suspended animation. Your mission (whether you want it or not) is to repair all 20 ships to 80



Stranded in space in Spacewrecked.

percent capacity and get the heck out of there.

✔ For the ultimate sports fan, **Speedball2** ($39.95) may be the ultimate sports game, as it combines basketball and hockey in a futuristic steel arena. The Stanley Cup finals look like a croquet match compared to this one. Injuries are a fact of life, but, fortunately, ambulance drones are ready to remove fallen players. You can even set player attributes, such as attack and defensive skills, speed, throwing and stomping abilities, energy, and aggression.

✔ What do you get when you combine roller derby with "professional" wrestling? **Rollerbabes** ($39.95), of course. Teams of eight jet-propelled rocket skaters score by covering distance, avoiding traps, and taking on the opponent head to head.

✔ You've probably tried flight, tank, and car simulations, but how about a motorcycle simulation? In **Team Suzuki** ($39.95), you'll compete in the Grand Prix season, consisting of 16 championship tracks. Start your engines.

✔ Finally, if you're into collecting baseball cards, which is big business these days, check out Konami's modified database manager **Baseball Card Collector** ($49.95). For details, see the sidebar on p. 32.

For more information on Konami games, contact the company at (708) 215-5100. — **D.M.**

Bane of the Cosmic Forge: The Sequel

Sir-Tech Software (Ogdensburg, NY) announced its 256-color VGA game system, which will also serve as the foundation for the sequel to **Bane of the Cosmic Forge**. In addition, the new system incorporates a mouse interface designed to speed up game play. Sir-Tech also announced its **Bane of the Cosmic Forge Hint Guide,** priced at $5 plus $1.50 for shipping. For more information, contact Sir-Tech Software at (315) 393-6451. — **D.M.**

Interplay Legends

Publish a game based on the first part of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* and you're almost honor-bound to complete the famous trilogy. Interplay (Santa Ana, CA) has accepted the challenge gladly: **The Two Towers** ($59.95) continues the tale of the "one true ring." As in the first game, the storyline in this fantasy role-play title stays faithful to Tolkien's epic tale.

You'll lead a party of benevolent characters as they travel through dark and dangerous lands as you battle orcs, trolls, wargs, and ghosts. You must avoid the machinations of the wicked Lord Sauron and the evil wizard Saruman until you reach the mysterious Two Towers.

✔ If you prefer legends with a more contemporary flavor, check out **Star Trek: The 25th Anniversary.** Join Kirk, Spock, Sulu, and the original Enterprise gang as they seek strange new worlds in this far-flung adventure — part space-flight simulator, part role-play game, with great-looking 3-D modeling in 256-color VGA graphics. This is Interplay's most ambitious offering yet. For more information, call (714) 549-2411. — **W.N.**

Real-Time Good Times

It's a dreary evening. You have no plans and find yourself home alone. You're restless and want something to do, but don't have enough get-up-and-go to go out and do anything. Rather than dial another one of those late-night 900 numbers, why not let your PC and modem connect you with the The Sierra Network (TSN), a new subsidiary of Sierra On-Line (Coarsegold, CA)?

TSN is designed to be an easy-to-use on-line game service that lets computer players at one machine compete head to head with other gamers (or literates) through an intuitive interface — no user IDs, passwords, or pull-down menus.

Currently, TSN offers only chess, checkers, backgammon, cribbage, hearts, and bridge; soon to be released, though, are two "cyberspace theme parks": SierraLand and LarryLand. In SierraLand, you'll stroll through a Sculpture Garden consisting of artworks created by TSN users (maybe even one by you), or go to an electronic schoolhouse where you can tutor another on-line friend and work together on projects. Of course, there will be plenty of rides for you to enjoy. After all, what's a park without rides? LarryLand is a slightly more adult-oriented theme park. You can play slot machines or poker, go dancing at a disco, enjoy some laughs at a comedy club, or just hang out at Lefty's bar.

TSN is in its early stages. The company's aim is to make the TSN service available to every PC/modem owner throughout the country for a flat monthly fee of $11.95, with an additional $6.50 charge each for SierraLand and LarryLand — no hourly fees, unlike many other on-line services' price structures. For now, though, it's available at a flat rate only in selected areas, and most of you will have to go through Telenet for $2 an hour until TSN is wired for the rest of the country.

Sierra warns that it will initially have problems handling large numbers of users. The company says, however, that it believes the end product — an easy-to-use, flat-rate, on-line entertainment system — will be worth any initial inconvenience encountered along the way. For more information, contact the company at (209) 683-4468. — **Dan Huston**

Patton Fights On

Chris Crawford, who brought you Balance of Power and Patton vs. Rommel, returns with **Patton Strikes Back** ($59.95), a military strategy game based on the Battle of the Bulge. (No, it's not a fad diet — it's one of World War II's most critical battles.) The game is distributed by Broderbund Software (San Rafael, CA).

It's December 1944, near Bastogne, Belgium, and American forces are almost surrounded by the German Panzer divisions. Not fog, nor snow, nor impassable roads, nor lack of air support will stop General George S. Patton and his tank force from attempting to break through enemy lines before the Allied troops are forced to surrender.

You control either the Allied or German side (if you don't care about patriotism). You can also choose to play the game under historically accurate tactical and weather conditions or, for variety, under random weather conditions with different forces on the battlefield.

A point-and-click interface both speeds up game play and keeps you from getting bogged down in details. Historical photographs provide insight into prominent military tactics, weapons, and characters of the WWII era. For more information, contact Broderbund Software at (415) 492-3200. **— D.M.**

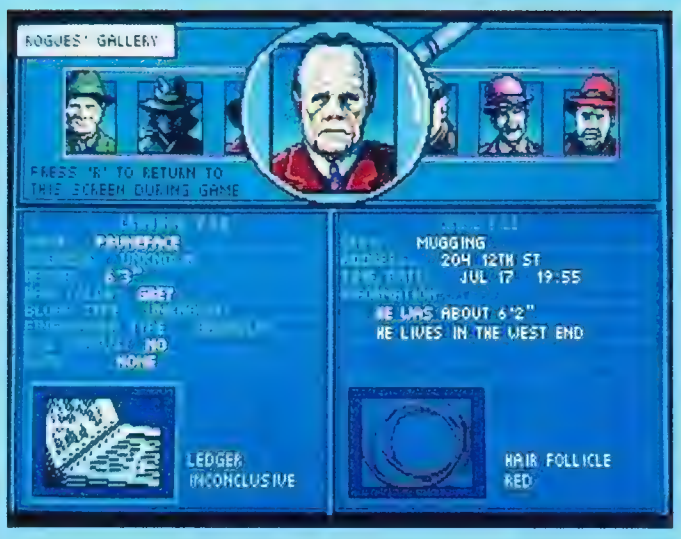
He's Back

At the end of the hit movie *The Terminator*, Arnold Schwarzenegger vows, "I'll be back." And he is — in the computer version of this sci-fi classic.

As you may remember, *The Terminator* is set in present-day Los Angeles. An indestructible cyborg (played by Schwarzenegger in the movie) is sent back from the future, where machines rule, to kill Sara Conner. Conner is destined to give birth to the man who'll ultimately save the earth from the no-good machines.

Human defenders from the future send a soldier to protect Conner. The soldier, Kyle Reese, must save Conner if humankind is to have any hope of survival. But is this mere mortal any match for the muscle-bound metallic Schwarzenegger?

According to Bethesda Softworks (Rockville, MD), one of the most unique aspects of the game version of *The Terminator* is that you'll find yourself in a sort of virtual reality, where your wits and cunning are what determine the game's outcome. You can also decide whether you want to play as Kyle Reese or as the Terminator.



Clean up the City by getting rid of the sinister gangsters in Dick Tracy.

✔ Bethesda has also announced that it's teaming up with Space Tech Enterprises to bring pigskin fanatics **Franchise Football League Fantasy Football** ($34.95). Form a league with friends and coworkers: You draft players and create your own dream team. You decide who plays, who sits, and who gets traded. Put together your weekly game plan, then watch how your guys do on Sunday. When your players score in the NFL game, they also score in the FFL; when they fumble in NFL action, though . . . .

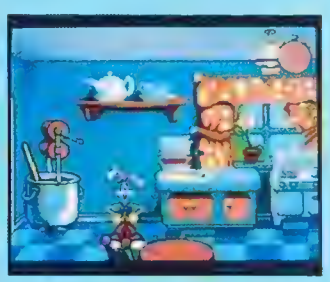
Prodigy Interactive Personal Services, an on-line service, will publish updated statistics on line. For more information, contact Bethesda Softworks at (301) 926-8300. **— D.M.**

The Wonderful World of Disney

What do famous detectives, wacky rabbits, fighting Nazi goons, and sensational air-flight simulators have in common? They're part of four new games from Walt Disney Computer Software (Burbank, CA).

✔ The computer game **Dick Tracy** ($49.95) may lack Warren Beatty and Madonna, but it does have extensive sound and music capabilities. Based on the recent movie, Dick Tracy lets you assume the role of everyone's favorite square-jawed detective. Back in the days when you could tell the good guys from the bad, Tracy tries to clean up the city, which is overrun with sinister gangsters. You look for clues, interrogate suspects, and throw a few punches when the mugs get tough. But your ultimate goal is to collar the mob's ringleader, Big Boy Caprice.

✔ **Hare Raising Havoc** ($49.95) is, according to Disney, an interactive cartoon. This adventure is filled with crazy characters, loony sounds, and, of course, everyone's favorite (or at least second-favorite) bunny, Roger Rabbit. You get to help the goofy-but-lovable hare find the missing Baby Herman before Mommy gets home.



Roger Rabbit is raising havoc.

✔ **The Rocketeer** ($49.95) follows in the jet stream of the hit summer movie, with players flying

vintage 1930s aircraft as well as the experimental Cirrus X-3 rocket pack. According to the company, this action-adventure game

Get in on the action in The Rocketeer.

boasts fully digitized videotaped action using original sets and props from the film. The computer game picks up where the movie ends: You're pitted against the Nazis as you attempt to save your kidnapped girlfriend. Good luck!

✔ **Stunt Island: The Flying and Filming Simulation** ($59.95) is Disney's initial public offering in the flight-simulator category. The Stunt Island complex was designed, according to the software company, specifically for the purpose of staging and filming exciting, death-defying aircraft stunts.

Stunt Island's flying high.

You'll put several aircraft, including P-51s and Pitts Specials, through their paces and film the stunts as you go. That's right — you're the director as well as the pilot, deciding camera placement and choreography (read "flying"). Then you'll edit your "film" into a mini-movie. For more information, contact Walt Disney Computer Software at (818) 567-0284. — **D.M./W.N.**

Thrilling Threesome

Whether you want to save the Earth from aliens, do battle from the inside of a tank, or just play a friendly game of baseball, Data East (San Jose, CA) has you covered.

✔ **Ultrabots Sanction: Earth** ($59.95) is a sci-fi adventure game boasting 3-D, 256-color graphics and supreme user control, according to the company. You're in charge of a fleet of Ultrabots battling against aliens who are threatening to take over the earth and destroy the human race. Your options range from directing an entire fleet to controlling each individual Ultrabot. Each move you make has hefty "risk versus return" implications and is crucial to the outcome of your mission, so be careful.

✔ If you like war games, but aliens and robots weird you out, try **Battlefield 2000** ($59.95). It sports 256-color graphics, as well, and lays claim to realistic play, featuring a three-dimensional landscape and realistic "in the cockpit" controls. You'll even have to contend with the damage done to your tank — engine, transmission, armament, optics, suspension, or communication systems. Though Battlefield 2000 doesn't give you any breaks, it does arm you well. You head off to battle with homing and anti-air missiles, armor piercing and anti-tank guns, auto cannons and smoke rounds, as well as air support. Like Ultrabots, Battlefield gives you the option of controlling the whole fleet or each individual tank. You can create new terrain layouts and modify your enemy's force configurations, ensuring that no two battles you fight will ever be the same.

✔ Okay, so you don't want to save the world or climb inside some heavy armor, but you still have that competitive edge. How about **Bo Jackson Baseball** ($49.95)? This game also emphasizes advanced graphics and user control. A game that lets you modify each player's strengths play by play certainly possesses user control (perhaps a bit too much?). The game's statistical feedback helps you construct your own team, player by player (including starting pitchers and relievers), using stats from more than 100 of the best players in baseball history. The graphics images include pitchers throwing from the wind-up as well as from the stretch. You can play Bo Jackson Baseball against the computer or against another crazed baseball fan. For more information, contact DataEast at (408) 286-7080.

— **Dan Huston**

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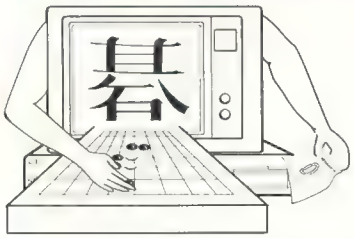

1990 Chaos Manor Users Choice Award
BYTE 4/90

"Please be warned that this game is addictive, is more interesting than all but the most engaging jobs..., and makes most other board games seem childishly unsophisticated. Those cautions having been stated, Go Junior may be recommended absolutely."
Charles Seiter, MacWorld 2/91

NEMESIS Go Junior $45 is an ideal introduction to Go.
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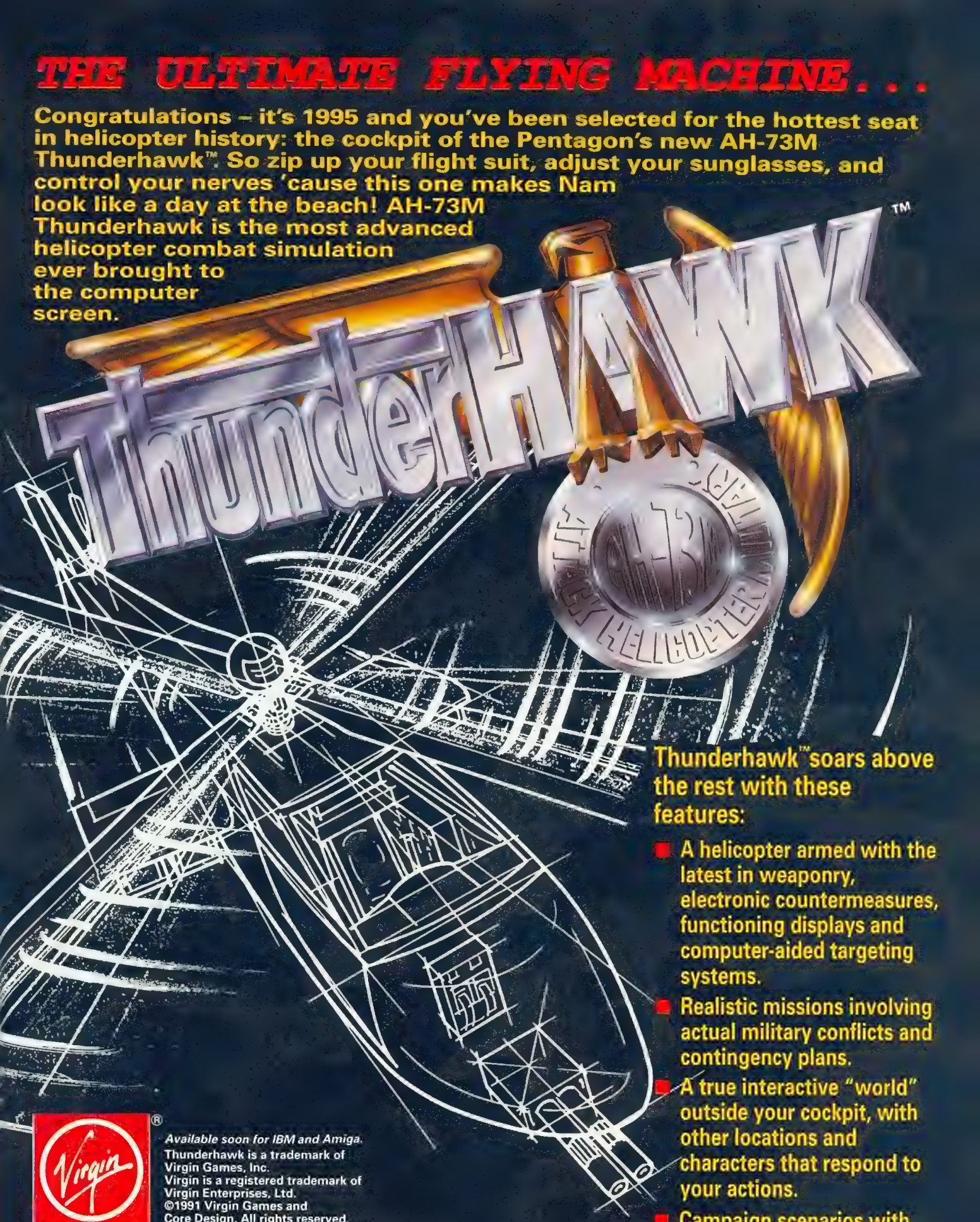
THE ULTIMATE FLYING MACHINE...

Congratulations – it's 1995 and you've been selected for the hottest seat in helicopter history: the cockpit of the Pentagon's new AH-73M Thunderhawk™. So zip up your flight suit, adjust your sunglasses, and control your nerves 'cause this one makes Nam look like a day at the beach! AH-73M Thunderhawk is the most advanced helicopter combat simulation ever brought to the computer screen.



Thunderhawk™ soars above the rest with these features:

- A helicopter armed with the latest in weaponry, electronic countermeasures, functioning displays and computer-aided targeting systems.
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- A true interactive "world" outside your cockpit, with other locations and characters that respond to your actions.
- Campaign scenarios with a multitude of missions.

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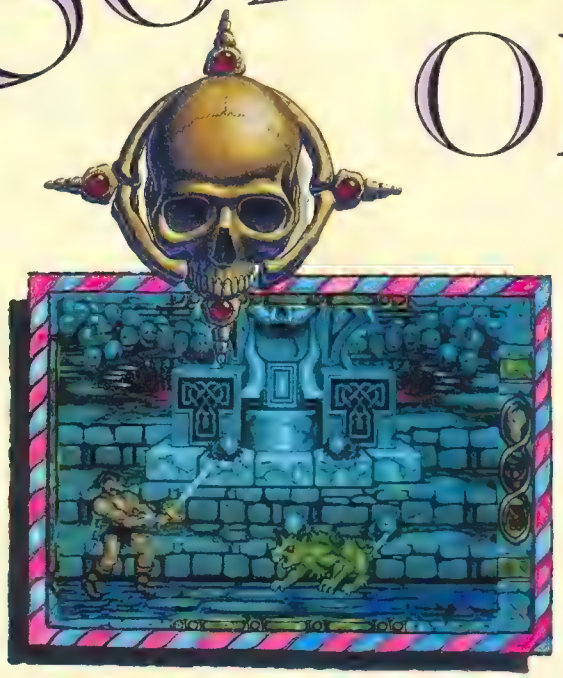


The greatest hero for the Hyborean Age was a fierce barbarian born of the harsh northlands,

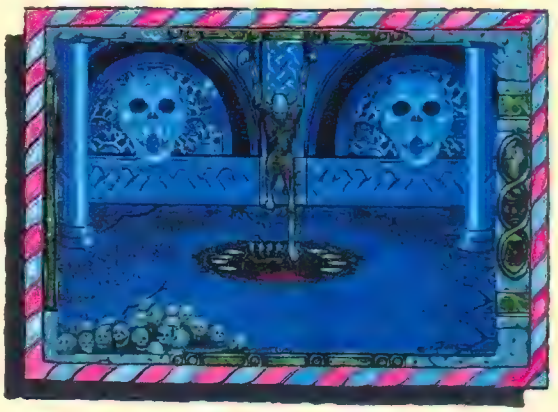
CONAN THE CIMMERIAN

You have heard the tales of Conan's adventures. Only now will you have the opportunity to live the life of this fierce barbarian from the land of Hyborea.

Our odyssey begins with murder most foul. When Conan's village is massacred by the ravening hordes of Thoth Amon, high priest of the vile cult of Set, Conan vows to avenge the death of his family and friends.

In your search for vengeance, you as Conan, will explore Hyborea to seek out its hidden secrets and learn of its powers. Visit over 200 locations – taverns and inns, crypts and dungeons, temples and tombs, lavish homes and poor hovels – to learn the mysteries of Hyborea's sorceries to help Conan overcome its many natural and supernatural perils.

Only with luck, courage and constant struggle will Conan have the chance to force a reckoning with the powerful Thoth Amon.



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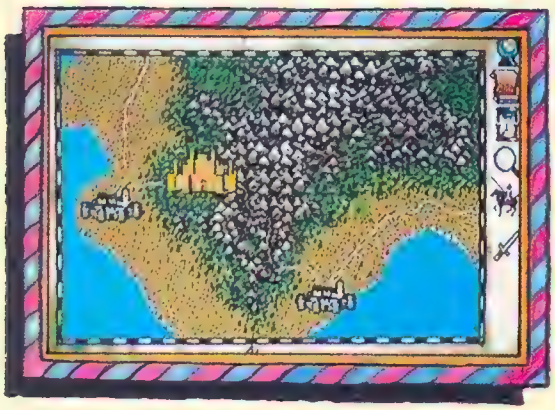

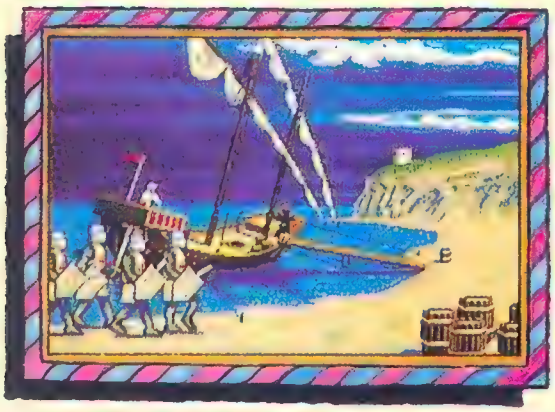

In Spirit of Excalibur, the Knights of the Round Table fought to defend medieval Britain from the evil sorceress, Morgan Le Fay. Morgan, dabbling in dark arts beyond even her ability to control, had summoned a great Lord of Demons, the Shadowmaster.

With Morgan's death, the Shadowmaster was freed to work his evil will against the unprepared folk of Britain. Striking in the night, he imprisoned the King with a spell, stole the greatest treasures of the realm and kidnapped Nineve, the court enchantress. With the loss of the sword Excalibur and the newly recovered Holy Grail, Britain begins to sicken and die. The Shadowmaster must be stopped!

Command knights and whatever followers they are able to recruit to track the Shadowmaster through hazardous, beautiful and mysterious medieval Spain. Explore the hundreds of villages and cities, fortresses and castles, dungeons and palaces and all the secret places where the Shadowmaster may dwell.

Seek what aid you can as you acquire and learn the use of the sorceries of Moorish Spain, for only with the aid of enchantments and the loyalty of strong allies will you stand a chance of ridding the world of the demonic Shadowmaster once and for all.

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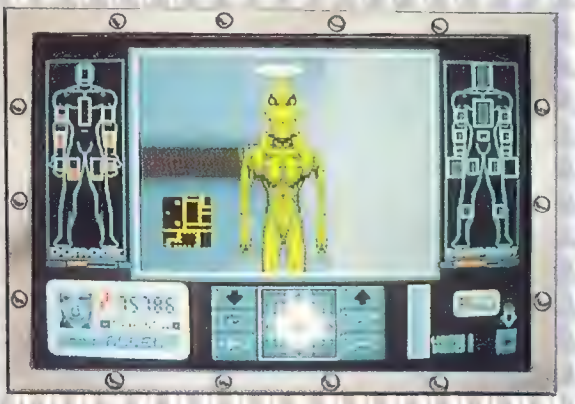
ALSO TAKING OVER A SEGA GENESIS NEAR YOU THIS FALL



ARE YOU TOUGH ENOUGH TO TAKE ON THE 21st CENTURY AND SAVE MANKIND FROM HIS UNTIMELY DESTRUCTION BY A GENETICALLY ENGINEERED WAR MACHINE?!?

Talk about your work-related stress! As a ZODIAC special agent, your job is to crack the complex security systems of the Universal Cybernetics Corporation and track down the mutant robot they have designed as the ultimate killing machine.

You'll arm yourself with a whole arsenal of weapons – everything from hologram projectors to special vision enhancement visors to thermal infra-red image intensifiers. If all else fails – you'll have to rely on your own psychic powers!

FEATURES INCLUDE:

- **16-level 3-dimensional environment complete with fast, smooth scrolling**
- **Realistic action control of six characters: 2 male, 2 female and 2 droid**
- **360 degree vision**
- **Environmental sound effects**

"Tension and unease, with danger lurking around every corner.... This Number One European Hit will keep you on your toes and coming back for more."

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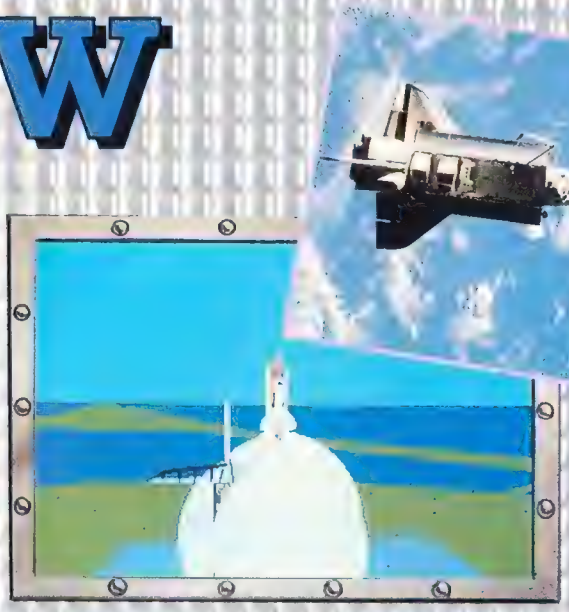

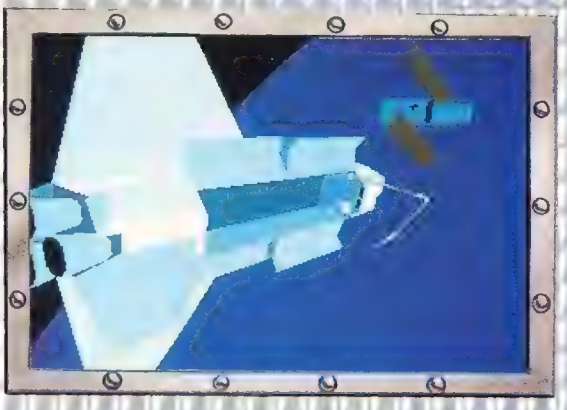

The space flight simulator to end all simulators, SHUTTLE is the most accurate and comprehensive simulation of NASA's Space Shuttle ever produced for the home computer.

With the aid of Mission Control, you will master such challenges as deploying and repairing satellites, launching spy satellites, maneuvering your craft in zero gravity, attaining the correct re-entry trajectory, and pulling off complicated landings.

Advanced polygon and elliptical graphics, along with actual land and star maps were used to create the breathtaking 3D panoramas of the Orbiter and its environment, which can be viewed from any angle at any time.

Other features include:

- **Authentic control panel display**
- **Detailed comprehensive training and reference manual**
- **Numerous training, scientific and "Star Wars" (SDI) Missions**
- **Multiple help levels from "novice" to "veteran"**
- **Various launch and landing sites**
- **Orchestral quality music**
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WAR IN THE MODERN WORLD

Only a handful of skilled pilots, soldiers, and sailors get to take control of today's sophisticated hi-tech military hardware — but computer-game players across the country can simulate realistic state-of-the-art combat right on their PC screens.

ON THE WAY TO THE SPINACH DIP YOU GET STUCK IN a corner with an amateur, someone who watched way too much TV during the Gulf War.

"The Marines didn't get in trouble often, but when they did they called in A-10s," he says. Too smug — time to deflate this guy's balloon.

"Actually, the real name is Thunderbolt II, but everyone calls them Warthogs. Those suckers are eat up with ugly," you reply.

"Those A-10s carry this big machine gun that can really do some damage," he adds, trying to shift the conversation back.

"Yea, that 30mm Avenger is kind of a Gatling cannon with seven barrels. Heck, it spews out these Coke-bottle sized shells so fast the pilot has to fight to keep the nose down!" People start to edge closer.

He tries to change the subject, explaining how to field-strip an M-16 rifle. With your hands carving the space around you, you counter with a riveting description of air-to-air combat. Leading your little group past the pool, you explain the complicated naval situation in the Gulf, while your opponent follows along shouting about the tasty qualities of MREs — "Meals Ready to Eat," those doggy-bag-like field rations.

Somewhere between the talk of smart weapons and your interpretation of the geopolitical balance of power, the know-it-all fades into the shadows. When someone asks how you know all this high-tech stuff, you just grin and say, "I keep up with the technology," and leave it at that. All those hours playing computer military simulations weren't a waste after all.

PC game players have known for years what the rest of the country only just found out: United States military hardware is state-of-the-art.

By Richard Sheffield

ILLUSTRATION BY DAVE BECK

SCHWARZKOPF

Flying the Falcon

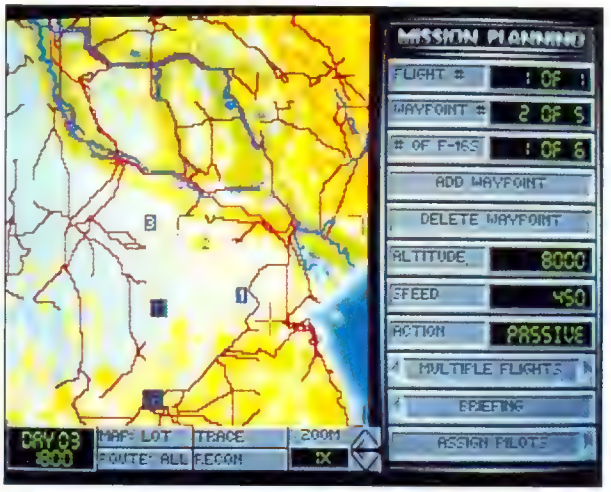
Airpower helped win the war in the Persian Gulf, and part of that technological edge was owing to the F-16 Fighting Falcon, an advanced Air Force fighter jet. Spectrum Holobyte's **Falcon 3.0** puts you in the cockpit, even lets you command up to seven other planes. Close to the cutting edge of computer-simulation technology, Falcon 3.0 is the most accurate military aircraft simulation on the PC today.

You can pick any of four flight models — ranging from the simple to the very complex — to match your skills, experience, and dedication to reality.

Falcon 3.0's graphic detail knows no bounds, whether you're looking at the cockpit instrumentation or watching an enemy jet explode.

The most complex is as accurate as an unclassified game is likely to get, though its PC power requirements are steep: Your machine needs a math coprocessor chip.

Great flight models may not sell computer games, but great graphics images do. Falcon 3.0's screens are first-rate, and include numerous digitized photos. No pyramid mountains in this package — you see



Recognize the terrain? This satellite view of the Persian Gulf region is what you'll use to play your missions.

realistic, contoured terrain. Your view from the cockpit is the best in the flight-simulator world. And Falcon 3.0's user interface is slick and easy to use.

All these bells and whistles would be wasted if Falcon 3.0 didn't involve you, the player. Its predecessors, Falcon and Falcon AT, came up short in the game-play department, but Falcon 3.0 excels in delivering a variety of flying experiences. You can play the game in one of four modes:

• *Instant Action* starts off in the middle of a dogfight. It's arcade-like, but serves as a great way to learn this complicated package.

DEADLY SERIOUS

They play all over the country, at the military's war colleges, at major universities, at defense contractors, at private consultancies, and especially in a small gaming center directly below the War Room in the Pentagon. The most powerful people in the country sometimes sit around playing games — deadly serious games.

Military war gaming has gained more and more credibility at the highest levels of government. A whole generation of military officers has been trained to use games to evaluate scenarios.

Ranging from something called The Global Game — played at the Naval War College and involving dozens of decision makers — to individual simulations, these computer war games are often designed by civilian programmers, such as Jim Dunnigan, a television commentator during the Gulf War and author of several books.

Dunnigan's work on some of the most top-secret games is immediately obvious. The ultra-secret theater-level game called Janus has a battlefield built of hexagons, something familiar to players of Dunnigan's board games. The Janus game, or something similar, modeled the successful tactics of the Gulf War long before the first troops crossed the frontier.

Another type of computer simulation takes place at defense contractors and military bases. Ground-based aircraft simulators such as the F-15 simulator at McDonnell-Douglas headquarters in St. Louis use computer-generated graphics to train pilots and to test systems. Using these simulators to teach basic tactics and instrument recognition cuts the cost, and danger, of pilot training drastically.

— R.S.

• *Campaign* mode is the heart of the simulation. Your squadron fights over Iraq and Kuwait, Panama, or Israel. Missions are based on your performance in previous flights, so no two campaigns are alike. It's up to you to decide which of your pilots flies a particular mission and how often. Fatigue is certainly a factor.
• *Red Flag* lets you build new scenarios.
• *Communications* mode makes it possible to fly via modem or direct connection with or against a friend.

Any way you want to look at it, Falcon 3.0 comes loaded for bear.

Warthogs on the Loose

If F-16 pilots are the glory boys, then A-10 pilots are the grunts of air warfare. The A-10 Thunderbolt II ground-attack aircraft is slow, does most of its work down in the weeds, and is certainly nothing to look at. But it does its job — killing enemy armored vehicles — phenomenally well. That's the appeal

A-10 Tank Killer boasts a digitized cockpit view of the real thing.

of this game. Even if you're a seasoned flight-simulator fan, Dynamix's **A-10 Tank Killer** forces you to learn a whole new bag of aerial-combat tricks.

You can get into the air quickly, thanks to the game's no-copy-protection policy. Once you select the mission or campaign and get briefed by ill-tempered Commander Cord, you're off to the weapons-load screen.

A terrific digitized photo of an A-10 serves as backdrop as you choose specific weapons or select a standard mission load.

From here you head into the cockpit. The instrument panel — digitized from an actual A-10 cockpit — looks great. Takeoffs and landings are a little simpler than some other simulators' because the A-10 flies so slowly. The only thing missing is an automatic-landing feature.

The missions themselves are straightforward, but few in number. Ranging from close air support and bridge busting to surface-to-air missile attacks, they demand precise navigation to the target and constant suppression of threats from the ground.

A-10 Tank Killer's biggest problems are its small number of missions (solved by the recent release of version 1.5, which includes 21 missions) and its lack of a real campaign mode. What's called a campaign is really just a back-to-back replay of the game's five missions.

Fortunately, you can find a new group of missions on the Sierra/Dynamix electronic bulletin board (though you'll need a modem to download them). Also available is an improved AdLib sound driver and a file that lets you adjust game speed for very fast machines.

A-10 Tank Killer, released long before the Gulf War began, brings the look and feel of close air support right to your living room (sand not included).

Made by General Motors

Tanks may have been one of the last pieces of military hardware to get into computer games, but Microprose makes up for lost time with **M1 Tank Platoon**.

It's as if toy tanks have come alive — you give them orders and watch them attack. They move, split up, find the enemy, and fire as best they can while you watch from above. But you can do more than just watch. You can shrink yourself down and become part of the action.

Target locked in. Fire!

M1 Tank Platoon emphasizes the team concept. You command a platoon of four M1A1 Abrams battle tanks, each with a four-person crew. It's up

to you to move the tanks, protect the most inept crews, and complete your missions.

You won't master this simulation in an afternoon. First-rate documentation helps, as do the several training scenarios. Still, giving orders and moving your tank platoon takes practice, and it's always easy to get flustered once the metal starts flying. Get it right, and you'll thrill to moving your team and watching your orders being carried out.

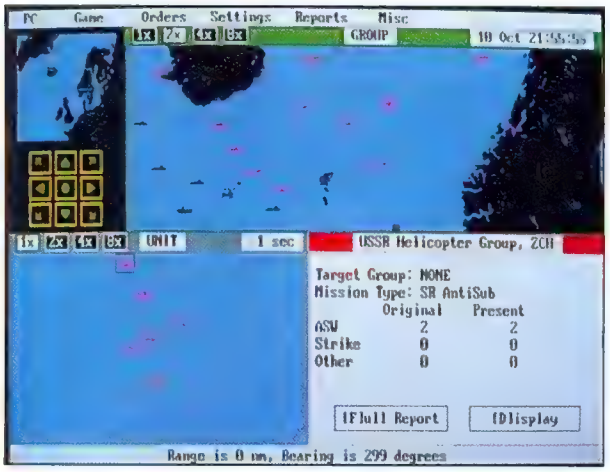
Your mission goals are basic: attack or defend. But because the terrain and available forces change constantly, no two missions are ever alike. Once you hone your skills in one-time missions, tackle a campaign. The linked campaigns in M1 Tank Platoon let you build on the past. If you do well on one mission, you'll likely be on the offensive the next. Expect realistic armored combat from M1 Tank Platoon.

Your 16 men will always be in M1s, but on many missions you get other vehicles as well. Learning to use these older tanks or armored personnel carriers effectively is one of this game's challenges.

Team command, air and artillery support, outside views, and first-person perspectives make M1 Tank Platoon as exhilarating and close to real armored combat as anyone would ever want to get.

Anchors Aweigh

Based on combat rules developed by naval analyst and best-selling author Larry Bond, and used to test some of the scenarios in Tom Clancy's novel



Modern war's waged under, on, and above the North Sea in Harpoon.

Red Storm Rising, Three-Sixty's **Harpoon** is the definitive simulation of war at sea.

This high-level strategy game puts you in command of ships, subs, and carriers packed with modern aircraft. With impressively detailed information on more than 100 NATO and Soviet weapon systems, Harpoon simulates a variety of technologies, ranging from surface-to-surface attack missiles to layered missile defenses. And because you're in control, you decide what sensors to activate and which weapons to fire.

The menu-driven interface is surprisingly easy to use, and though you can run the game from the keyboard, you'll be hard-pressed to manage the later, larger scenarios without a mouse. A hard drive is required because of the simulation's sheer size.

Harpoon's excellent graphics images go a long way toward keeping you informed. Watching missiles move to intercept faraway icons is a real lesson on the impersonal nature of modern warfare.

Anticipation is key to Harpoon. Better post an air patrol and get the E-2C Hawkeyes up, or it may be too late by the time you detect a swarm of enemy cruise missiles on radar. Just as in real life, many of Harpoon's scenarios come down to a battle of electronics.

The two booklets included in the package are real gems. Bond's *Tactical Guide* is an easy-to-understand primer on naval warfare, while Tom Clancy's account of a tour of Soviet warships is entertaining and informative.

No doubt about it — Harpoon is a complex exercise that's not easily mastered. It takes experience and practice. Designed to provide more than 100 hours of play, Harpoon may be the one military simulation you never outgrow.

War Around the World

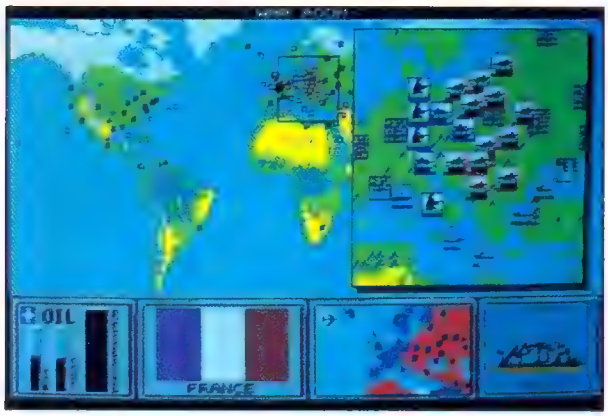
Want to conquer the world? Then step into Microprose's **Command H.Q.**, a high-tech command center where you deploy infantry, armor, ships, subs, and air units to carry out your overall strategic plan.

Though its concepts and strategies may be complex, Command H.Q.'s game play and interface are remarkably simple. Information is displayed on a large map and four smaller monitors. You can zoom into the large map, which displays icons that represent the opposing forces.

Secondary monitors keep you up to date with information on oil, the area under the mouse cursor, and enemy action, and even show an occasional animated sequence highlighting your orders. To give an order, you just click the mouse; in a moment, units start to move.

But there's more to global combat than battling

armies. Economics, production capability, and politics play important roles, too. Control of oil is a major factor in almost every scenario. And who says you can't buy friends? A little foreign aid can keep your allies from switching sides.



Command H.Q. shifts conflict to a global stage, complete with massive armies, navies, and air forces.

The scenarios include World Wars I, II, III, and IV, and can be fought against various computer opponents. World Wars I and II reflect the technologies and alliances of their times. World War III takes place in 1986, complete with nuclear weapons (good thing we missed this one), while World War IV has a 2026 dateline. The most interesting opponent is always another human, and that's really how Command H.Q. should be played. The two-player modem setup is easy to start and works well.

While this is definitely a beer-and-pretzels kind of game, all but the most bellicose players should be entertained by the political and economic aspects. It sure beats a game of Risk.

Next Generation

Even more hi-tech PC weapons are in the works. Microprose plans to roll out F-117A Nighthawk and Gunship 2000, realistic simulations of the Stealth fighter bomber and the Apache helicopter gunship, two acclaimed machines from the Gulf War. And Spectrum Holobyte is working feverishly on A-10 Avenger. The company also hopes to link people playing different simulations via modem in a common environment. This Electronic Battlefield concept would go far in making PC war games even more sophisticated and realistic.

As recent events have demonstrated, almost everyone's fascinated by modern military systems. PC gamers are no different — they just have a head start. ❑

PRODUCT INFORMATION

A-10 Tank Killer

Dynamix/Sierra On-Line
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(800) 326-6654
$49.95
$59.95 version 1.5
512K IBM PC and compatibles;
640K Tandy
EGA, MCGA, 256-color VGA,
Tandy 16-color
supports AdLib, Sound Blaster,
Roland sound cards

Command H.Q.

Microplay
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
(301) 771-1151
$59.95
640K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
EGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color
supports AdLib, Roland sound cards
off-disk copy protection

Falcon 3.0

Spectrum Holobyte
2061 Challenger Drive
Alameda, CA 94501
(415) 522-0107
$69.95
640K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
(286 or faster required)
EGA, 16-color VGA, 256-color VGA
supports AdLib, Sound Blaster,
Roland, PS/1 sound cards

Harpoon

Three-Sixty Pacific
2105 South Bascom Avenue
Suite 380
Campbell, CA 95008
(408) 879-9144
$59.95
640K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA 16-color,
Tandy 16-color
mouse, hard drive recommended

M1 Tank Platoon

Microprose
180 Lakefront Drive
Hunt Valley, MD 21030
(301) 771-1151
$69.95
512K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
Hercules, CGA, EGA, MCGA,
256-color VGA, Tandy 16-color
supports AdLib sound card
copy protection

ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN CEBALLOS

AN ENDLESS SEASON

THE WEATHER MAY BE GETTING CHILLY, BUT SPORTS FANS ARE JUST getting hot. The World Series is only weeks away and football's feeding frenzy has just kicked off. NBA and college basketball tips off in — are you ready for this? — less than two months. That's barely enough time for a true sports nut to catch a breath, restock the fridge, and put new batteries in the TV remote.

Slap-happy sports addicts don't have to do without a single day of major-league fun when a PC's near at hand. Indulge in your favorite pastime whenever you want — and with today's sophisticated graphics and sound, PC sports have never been more realistic.

By Lafe Low

AN ENDLESS SEASON

LEAVE YOUR CARDS IN THE CLOSET

Collecting baseball cards is a fun, and sometimes lucrative, hobby. Keeping track of a large collection can be a headache, though. Now you can dispense with the hassle, thanks to Rizon/Konami's BASEBALL CARD COLLECTOR ($49.95, 900 Deerfield Parkway, Buffalo Grove, IL 60089, 708-215-5111), a program that lets you leave your cards in the shoebox and manipulate vital statistics from your PC.

BCC handles any set of cards from any manufacturer (Topps, Upper Deck, and so on). It stores player data two ways: information on the back of the card (name, position, height, weight, and so on) and card detail (year, company, card number, and team), which the program uses to generate an inventory list. BBC lets you keep track of market and street values of your cards, how much you paid, mint-condition value, and which you've sold. You can also enter memorable personal information, such as where you got a card or how you managed to get an autograph. You can print reports based on market value, items sold, and so on, or generate your own, picking and choosing which statistics to include. If you're not thrilled by the idea of inputting statistics, Konami offers stats disks for $29.95 each, complete with all data on all players for any year. (BBC comes with the 1990 disk.)

If your love of collecting goes beyond just baseball, GRAND SLAM ($34.95) manages hockey, basketball, and football cards, too. Its Create a New Sport option lets you keep track of any other cards you collect, as well — individual ones, as well as complete sets, statistics, and values. It comes with data for all sets of 1991 baseball cards, 1990-91 hockey cards, 1990-91 basketball cards, and 1990 football cards. You can generate reports or order data reports for the four sports since 1948. Contact Grand Slam Software, 252 Queen St., Stratford, Ontario, Canada N5A 4P1, (519) 271-4664. — Dan Huston

BATTER UP!

Computer baseball games have their work cut out for them. Not only must they capture the fluid action and constant excitement of real baseball, but they must remain statistically accurate and detailed enough to satisfy the box-score fanatic.

More than any other sport, baseball is a game of statistics. Most fans can rattle off more numbers than an IRS auditor. Some PC baseball games have been good at numbers, some have been great at action, and some have gotten caught in an unsatisfying squeeze play between the two.

That's why one baseball-game sequel will keep even the October-only baseball fan swinging into the wee hours of the night: **Earl Weaver II** walks the fine line between action and stats gracefully, to bring a more complete, and more realistic, baseball picture (and pitcher) to your PC.

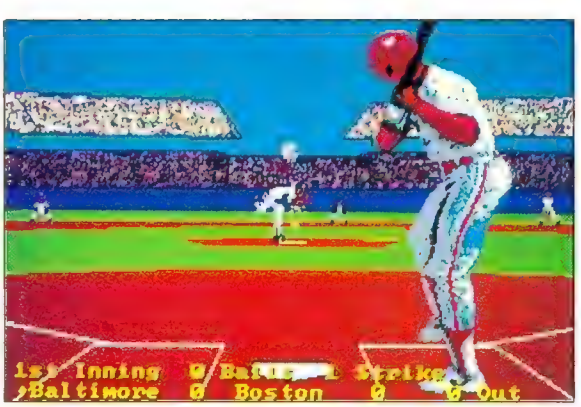
Electronic Arts has again recruited the master manager of the Baltimore Orioles for his help in preparing Earl Weaver II. This game caters to everyone — it lets you play any way you want.

The ump makes the call in Earl Weaver II. Check out the slow-motion replay before you kick dirt on his shoes.

You're more into managing than swinging? Then try the super-fast stats game. Like to nail the ball yourself, hand/eye coordination and all? Then go all the way — the full graphics, stats, and physics game.

If you decide to play by the numbers, you can run through a single game, or even an entire series, in a short time to verify that your team lineups perform as expected.

Once a game is in progress, you'll see a barrage of runs, hits, and errors flash across your screen, just as if you were watching a time-lapse recording of a real scoreboard. In less time than it takes to munch a Fenway Frank, you've played nine innings.



That fastball's staring you in the face. Swing big and you can drive it out of the park.

Of course, you can play the kind of baseball you see on TV or at the ballpark by switching to the full-blown graphics game. Earl Weaver II's point-of-view perspective and fluid player animation are unparalleled.

At the first pitch, you look through the eyes of the home-plate umpire. But instead of calling the pitches, you swing at them. Meet the ball too early or late and the ball tips down the base line; time it perfectly and you power a ballistic hit past center field. It takes practice to get it just right.

Once you make contact, your point of view changes to see the action,

AN ENDLESS SEASON

whether it's from along the base line, up in the stands, or overhead. You won't miss a thing.

As impressive as the perspective is, there's also a whole dugoutful of features that add to the game's authenticity, including instant replay, advice from Earl, a radar gun to clock the ball's speed, timeouts, and of course, the umpire's calls.

You run the offense in ABC Monday Night Football. Pass or hand off quickly, before the rush gets to you.

If you don't like the call, check out the slow-motion replay before you kick dirt on the ump's shoes. In league play, you can clear a player's or a team's accumulated stats, hold batting practice, play a round robin, adjust such settings as the designated-hitter rule and pitcher rotation, and decide whether players can get injured.

And you don't play in some nondescript, generic park in Earl Weaver II. You play in Yankee Stadium, Tiger Stadium, Weaver Stadium, and a host of others. Along with an overhead view of each field, you also get its vital statistics, such as the length and height of the park at left, center, and right field. Playing at Fenway? Make sure you have a strong hitter who can pop a long, high ball out over the infamous green monster at left field.

Weaver's hand is obvious in the game's statistical depth and accuracy. Electronic Arts' hand shows in the game's smooth animation and crisp graphics. Though Earl Weaver II was still under development at press time, it should be out and swinging by October.

MONDAY-NIGHT RITUAL

For millions of sports fans across the country, Monday night means football. If you can't wait to hit the couch on Monday evening, treat yourself to a weekful of Mondays with a big winner called **ABC Monday Night Football**, from Data East.

It's not easy re-creating football on a PC. Once a play starts, every offensive and defensive player is on a mission. It's the same sort of organized mayhem you see on real football fields.

ABC Monday Night Football puts you in as much of the action as possible. On offense, you play the quarterback, then any intended receiver. When the tables turn and you're on defense, you control the player closest to the ball carrier. If

You'll catch all the action as TV-like perspectives put you right in the stadium.

GAMES WE'LL NEVER SEE

Professional sports poke fun at themselves often enough. Why can't computer games join in?

Three widely known figures in today's sports are natural stars of their own make-believe computer games: the wayward Pete Rose, the multitalented multimillionaire Bo Jackson, and the ubiquitous free agent.

Pete Rose Home-Team Gambling combines the thrill of a baseball game with the high stakes of Vegas-style gambling. Bet on any major league team, or play it safe and put your money on the team you know best — your own.

Bo Does Endorsements plays like an arcade game. The playing area's full of major sponsor labels, all ripe with endorsement contracts. As Bo Jackson, you run from sponsor to sponsor to film TV advertisements and rake in the bucks. But your time is limited — you have to play once in a while, you know. At any time, the feared game-ending injury can close out your commercial career. Naturally, the Bo with the biggest endorsements wins.

Free Agent Contract Scramble casts you as an enterprising free agent in an adventure role-playing game. You move through a strange world populated by demons and monsters — professional team owners. Be at the right place at the right time, answer the puzzling questions correctly (hey, I was in drug rehab only once, pal), and pick the most opportune moment to accept an offer. Do it right and you can guarantee yourself an income that puts you squarely in the stinking-rich category.

Games like these might never see the light of day, but they'd sure provide some balance to the countless number of serious sports games out there. After all, sports are supposed to entertain. Why not take it to the limit, just as Pete, Bo, and free agents do?

— L.L.

AN ENDLESS SEASON

BEATING THE ODDS

What happens when an NFL team plays on its home field on a Monday night under a new moon after losing its last game to an underdog by 14 points? If you're a pigskin prognosticator, put away your pencils and calculators: Computer Sports World offers four new handicapping programs.

THE EXPERT ($179) takes almost every factor imaginable into consideration to determine trends that will help you pick a winner — creating, testing, and ranking situations from which it generates 50 top strategies. You can view any game schedule for any week of the season, plus win/loss stats, average points scored and allowed, current point-spread standings, and more. Through its Picks screen, you view which of the current top 50 strategies apply to the games of a specified week.

POINTSPREAD ANALYZER ($79.95) follows the same format for college ball. SCORECAST III's ($79.95) database includes detailed stats for every pre-, regular-, and post-season game for every pro team, from the current year to nine seasons back. Printouts include details of specific games, forecasts of scores and spreads, and league and conference standings.

Michael "Roxy" Roxborough, consultant to more than three-quarters of Las Vegas' sports books, got together with a couple of Ph.D. statisticians to develop ROXY'S POWER RATINGS ($79.95), a proven system for determining the strengths and weaknesses of football teams. Ratings are updated weekly. The difference is used to estimate point spread; factors such as home field, injuries, and weather affect the ratings. A Wild Card factor lets you enter various trends from The Expert or Point-spread Analyzer to customize ratings. The Matchups screen lists all games for a given week with ratings, predicted and actual spreads, and scores, plus team standings in order of power rating or win/loss record. Contact CSW at 1005 Elm St., Boulder City, NV 89005, (702) 294-0191. — Dan Huston

you don't sack the quarterback before he releases, you'll suddenly find yourself downfield trying to intercept the pass or tackle the runner.

This game has all-stars you see every week on TV, including Frank Gifford, who introduces the game. You can pick your team from any of the NFL's finest: San Francisco, Dallas, New England, any city in the league. You can even play incognito — a good idea if you take New England — by changing the team's traditional uniform colors.

After you've selected a team, you can adjust each player's attributes, and balance his prowess at running, passing, ball handling, receiving, and pass blocking. Naturally each pair of attributes goes along with the appropriate position.

A missing touch would let you create the ultimate player, but ABC Monday Night Football limits each player to a total ranking of 5. Give a receiver a 3 for receiving, and you can only give him a 2 for running.

You have a wide variety of offensive plays and defensive formations at your disposal, but of course you can also create your own and save them in a playbook if you think you're smarter than the average NFL coach out there.

You can even adjust the length of each quarter. If your boss is stepping out of the office for half an hour, play it safe with five-minute quarters; play the full 15-minute quarters when you get home.

ABC Monday Night Football screens are nothing short of superb. To start with, the play-selection screens shown before each snap are clear, and the individual players appear nice and large once the play is in progress, so you can easily see what's happening.

At the snap, you control the quarterback, who's marked by a superimposed triangle. Hand off to a running back, pass to a receiver, or run it yourself. When you hand off or pass, control switches to the player carrying the ball.

On defense, you always run the man nearest the ball carrier. The kicking game plays somewhat like PC golf, with a power meter showing how hard you kick, and demands on your accuracy as you try to kick at just the right moment.

Data East's ABC Monday Night Football is pure football action — a fan's computer game. The only thing missing is a couple of cold beers, a bowl of pretzels, and Hank Williams Jr. playing that old favorite — the *Monday Night Football* theme song.

Pick your teams — even replay the NBA finals — in Lakers Versus Celtics.

JUMP BALL

Classic rivalries are the stuff of which history is made: Rommel versus Montgomery, Wile E. Coyote versus the Road Runner, and "tastes great" versus "less filling." The clash of NBA titans like the Los Angeles Lakers and the Boston Celtics certainly deserves a spot among such competitions.

Electronic Arts' **Lakers Versus Celtics: The NBA Playoffs** captures the coast-to-coast court clash that for years has made the playoffs a real treat to watch.

AN ENDLESS SEASON

Of course, if you'd rather play as another NBA team, that's all right too. You can play as or against the Lakers or the Celtics, or the Phoenix Suns, Seattle Supersonics, Utah Jazz, Detroit Pistons, Chicago Bulls, New York Knicks, West All-Stars, or East All-Stars.

Kareem's skyhook is still devastating in Lakers Versus Celtics.

You can opt to play a single game or begin a single-elimination tournament. Pick your team and the team you'll play against. Once you've selected your team, you see a full roster of that team's actual players and a full complement of each player's offensive and defensive statistics. You can go with the starting lineup or bring up some of the bench. If you're playing against a weak team, you may want to give your big guns a break until the score gets close.

A host of options let you adjust the game's level of reality. You can play in arcade mode (where the players never tire) or in simulation mode, where the incessant running up and down court wears out your players. You can also pick between preseason, regular season, and showtime games.

With each increasing level of reality, your opponents' intensity and the referees' scrutiny increases dramatically. If you opt instantly to play a tournament, note that play is set automatically to showtime. You'll want to log a few preseason games first to get the hang of things.

Even in the preseason games, the zebras (a not-too-affectionate term for the referees) can kill you. Pay attention to where you are and how long you're there. Plowing into an opponent inadvertently or hanging out in the three-second zone can put whistles in your ear.

You're allowed five time-outs per half, but if you haven't used them in the first half, don't expect to have them in the second. Use them wisely and rotate your players when they get tired if you're playing in simulation mode. Even the NBA's finest get tired.

The software's animation and characterization of each player in Lakers Versus Celtics are fascinating. You can easily recognize Larry Bird by his fair hair and devastating three-point jumpers, or Kareem Abdul-Jabaar by his height and the protective glasses he wears. This one's so good you'll swear you're watching a game on TV when you see him launch one of his hook shots.

It's hard to decide what's the biggest kick — the true-to-life basketball action, or the fact that you can actually control such NBA legends as Kareem, Bird, and Robert Parrish. Lakers Versus Celtics is notable for both.

Even without the sport's recognizable figures, this game plays like real basketball — fast and furious. No doubt about it — it's as if you'd just broken into a televised NBA game.

OVERTIME

You'll definitely go into overtime once you start playing any of these computer-sports all-stars. Whether you're the kind of fan who prefers to have your brain tingle at statistically accurate realism or the sort who likes to feel his or her palms sweat with life-like sports action, you've got some prime draft picks here.

Whether your passion is baseball, football, basketball, or all three, adding these great games to your PC lineup will keep you swinging, passing, shooting, and blocking long after the whistle blows. ❑

PRODUCT INFORMATION

ABC Monday Night Football

Data East USA
1850 Little Orchard Street
San Jose, CA 95125
(408) 286-7074
$49.95
512K IBM PC and compatibles
640K Tandy
CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color
DOS 3.0 or higher
supports keyboard
joystick, hard disk recommended
off-disk copy protection

Earl Weaver II

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171
$49.95
256-color MCGA, VGA

Lakers vs. Celtics: The NBA Playoffs

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171
$24.95
384K IBM PC, Tandy,
and compatibles
CGA, EGA, Tandy 16-color
DOS 2.1 or higher
supports Roland MT-32,
AdLib sound boards
supports keyboard
joystick recommended
off-disk copy protection

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IBM WARGAMES

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Action off River Plate	$28
Action Stations	$29
Air Raid Pearl Harbour	$28
American Civil War Ea	$24
Ancient Battles	$32

'STARTREK: THE 25th ANIVERSARY' from **INTERSTEL** combines a realistic 3D space flight simulator with an in deth role-playing game. Pilot the Enterprise through a simulation similar to **'WING COMMANDER'**. Discover dozens of planets, beam down to explore them. Each planet with its own unique adventure. Features point-and-click, 256 color VGA & adlib support. **$36**

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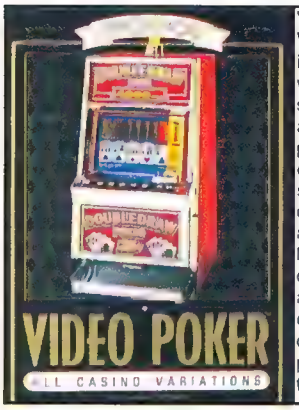

'VIDEO POKER' from **VILLA CRESPO** includes all casino variations. It lets you set your bank roll, select a machine, & control payoffs. It features extensive context sensitive help, an in depth tutor for every aspect of the game, 3 levels of sound, realistic cards with optional animation, a machine editor to create your own machines, & 2 player head to head real time competition. **$34**

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'DEALER'S CHOICE' from **VILLA CRESPO** offers 28 different poker variations, realistic action,comprehensive tutor, & great graphics. Set the personalities of up to seven opponents. **'DEALER'S CHOICE'** features . Statistics accumulation, odds displays, easy quick start interface, mouse support. Games include 5, 6, or 7 card Stud, Draw poker, Mexican poker, Forty four & others. **$34**

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IBM WARGAMES

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IBM STRATEGY

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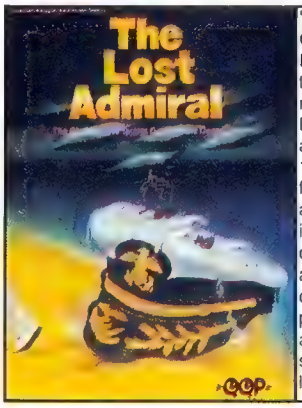
Full Metal Planet	$31



'LOST ADMIRAL' from **QUANTUM QUALITY PRODUCTIONS** is a turn based production naval strategy game. Features 9 sccenarios, a random map scenario, 15 campaign games, flagships with special abilities, strong artificial intelligence, in depth officers ranking system, accumulates your career history as you paly, 2 player option, and sound board support. In short alot like **EMPIRE.** **$36**

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Operation Combat	$29
Overlord	$28
Perfect General	$36
Populous	$31
Populous & Simcity	$34
Populous Promise Land	$14
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Power Monger WW 1	$32
Project Moonbase	$29
Project Space Station	$15
Railroad Tycoon	$34
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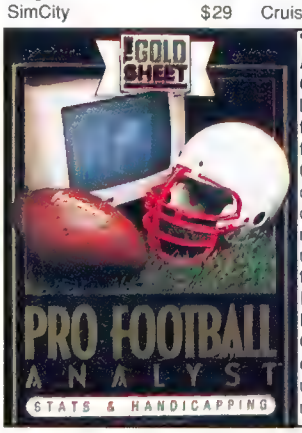
Revolution 76	$32
Romnc 3 Kngdm 1or 2	$42
Rules of Engagement	$38
Siege	$38
SimCity	$29



'PRO FOOTBALL ANALYST' from **VILLA CRESPO** is a statistics handicapping system for the stats oriented fan. Features display of 60 stats by team or category, trend spotting, offensive/dfensive rankings for each stat, unlimited prediction & trend formulas. Includes 2 years stats. Predict game results. Create & print pool entries. Easy stats updates by modem, mail or manually. **$37**

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SimCity Graphic 1or 2	$23
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Advnts Willie Beamish	$37
Altered Destiny	$34
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Chmbr Sci Mutnt Prstss	$15
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Code Name: Iceman	$34
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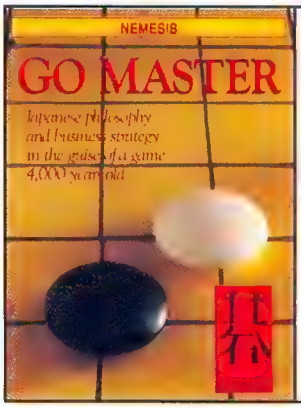

'NEMESIS GO' from **TOYOGO** is the ultimate computer **GO** program. With the simplicity of checkers and the complexity of chess, **GO** is both an enjoyable recreation and a serious strategy game. **GO MASTER** is a basic **GO** player and tutor. **JOSEKI GENIUS** adds complex corner openings. **TACTICAL WIZARD** is the ultimate tutor offering in depth tactical analysis. **GO** is 4000 years old. **$39**

Countdown	$37
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Dark Heart of Uukrul	$34
Dark Side	$28
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Fool's Errand	$12
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IBM ADVENTURE

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Indy Jones L Crsd vga	$38
Indy Jones Fate Atlantis	$38
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King's Quest 1Enhncd	$34
King's Quest 2 or 3	$28
King's Quest 4	$34
King's Quest 5 ega	$34
King's Quest 5 vga	$39
Leisure Suit Lrry 1 ega	$16
Leisure Suit Lrry 1 vga	$37
Leisure Suit Lrry 2 or 3	$34
Leisure Suit Lrry 5	$39
Loom	$21
Lost in LA	$37
Magnetic Scrolls Bndl	$37
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Police Quest 2	$34
Police Quest 3	$39
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Rise of the Dragon	$34
Search for the King	$37
Secrt Monky Islnd 1ega	$28
Secrt Monky Islnd 1vga	$38
Secrt Monky Islnd 2	$38
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Shogun	$12
Sleeping Gods Lie	$27
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Space Quest 1 vga	$37
Space Quest 2	$28
Space Quest 3	$34
Space Quest 4	$37
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Startrek 5	$34
Startrek 25th Aniversry	$42
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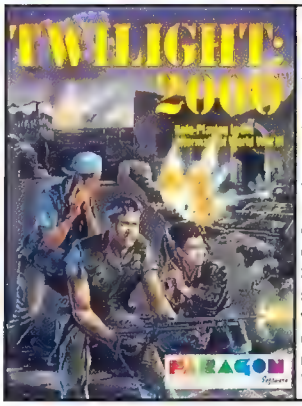
Cycles Grand Prix	$28
Days of Thunder	$25



'TWILIGHT 2000' from **MICROPROSE** is a roleplaying game set in the aftermath of WW3. Test your leadership skills by commanding a squad of 20. Features individual motivations, values & moral code, 50 attributes/skills, 60 careers, overhead 3D outdoor views, detailed 3D military vehicle simulators, masses of vehicles, weapons, & explosives to kill & maim with. 256 color VGA, adlib support. **$34**

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Lakers v Celtics	$19
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LH Full Count Baseball	$30
LH Hockey	$30
LH Pro Basketball	$30
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Links Golf	$37
Links Courses 1-5 Ea	$17
Madden Football	$32
Madden Team Disk 89	$18
Magic Johnson Bball	$ 9
Magic Johnson MVP	$18
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Microleague Baseball 3	$34
ML World Series Ea	$17
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ML Box Score Stats	$20
ML GM Disk 3	$25
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IBM SPORTS

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NG Course 1 & 2	$19
Omni Horse Racing	$18
Orel Hirshiser's Baseball	$28
Pete Rose Baseball	$ 9
PGA Tour Golf	$32
Pro Tennis Tour 2	$32
Rack'em	$12
Reel Fish'n	$12
Sport of Kings	$18
Tennis Cup	$32
Tonny LaRussa Baseball	$32

'ACTION STATIONS' by **RAW SOFTWARE** is a naval suface combat simulation. This game covers 1922 to 45 in amazing detail. Features 21 status displays, 30 scenarios in the Atlantic, Med and Pacific, subordinate comanders, treatment of smoke, starshells, flares, radar, weather, shore batteries, aircraft spotting & more. Ships are modeled in detail. This is the premier WW2 naval game. **$29**

Weaver Baseball 1.5	$19
Weaver Commissioner	$16
Weaver 1988 - 1990 Ea	$16
Weaver Baseball 2.0	$32
Weaver Commisnr 2.0	$21

'WORLDS AT WAR' by **Lyric Software** is a game of naval combat on a galactic scale. Simple in concept, you can play the tactical study for an hour; or the campaign game for a weekend. Features include random map generation, hidden movemnet, design your own task forces, capture palnets to build more units. **CGW** said "...like **EMPIRE**, what this game has is play-value". **$30**

NASCAR Challenge	$31
NFL Challenge	$60
NFL 1985 - 1987 Ea	$15
NFL 1988 - 1990 Ea	$22
NFL All Star Teams	$22
NFL College Alumni	$22
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Bard's Tale 1	$15

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Champions of Krynn	$32
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Megatraveller 1	$19
Megatraveller 2	$34
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Midwinter 2	$29
Might & Magic 1	$12
Might & Magic 2	$17
Might & Magic 1 & 2	$33
Might & Magic 3	$38
Murder	$29
Pirates	$12
Planet's Edge	$38
Sentinal Worlds	$18
Space 1889	$19
Space Rogue	$30
Spirit of Excaliber	$29
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Star Saga 1or 2	$34

IBM ROLE PLAYING

Sword of the Samurai	$12
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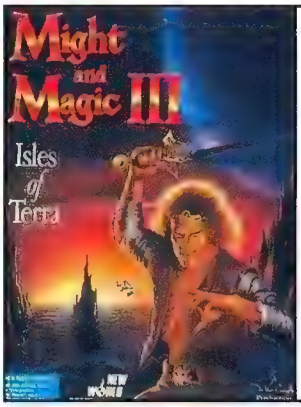
Tangled Tales	$21
Times of Lore	$28
Tunnels & Trolls	$12
Twilight 2000	$34



'MIGHT & MAGIC 3' from **NEW WORLD** is a first person roleplaying game. Explore towns, dungeons, wilderness, & castles. Thousands of animated inhabitants, places & things to discover. Great music, sound fx, & speech add another dimension to game play. Automatic help when your stuck keeps you going in the tuff spots. Features pop up maps, 256 color VGA, & sound board support. **$38**

Ultima Martian Dreams	$37
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IBM SIMULATION

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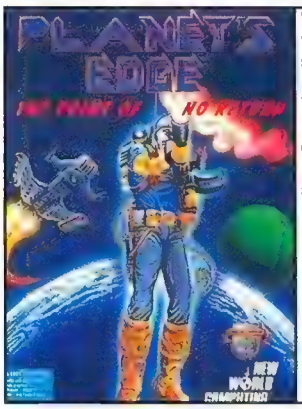
Mechwarrior	$33



'PLANET'S EDGE' from **NEW WORLD** is a save the Earth sci fi roleplaying game. Track down a missing Earth & return it to its own place & time. Explore dozens of solar systems featuring unique inhabitants & environments. Design your own space ship. Features puzzles with multiple solutions, 3D perspective, strategy or real time combat, 256 color VGA & sound board support. **$38**

Megafortress	$37
Megafortress Mission 2	$24
Mig 29 Fulcrum	$45
PT 109	$15
Red Baron EGA	$34
Red Baron VGA	$36
Red Storm Rising	$12
Rapcon	$33
Sailing Simulator	$39
East Coast Voyages	$39
West Coast Voyages	$39
Sands of Fire	$31

'MAGIC CANDLE 2' from **MINDCRAFT** is an in depth roleplaying game. The sequel surpasses the original. Features a great story, new magic, new monsters, new skills, new npcs, old friends, optional auto combat, conversation recorder save your conversations to disk, printouts , text searches, automatic mapping, split parties, mouse support, 256 color VGA, sound board support. **$38**

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IBM SIMULATION

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Startrek 25th Aniversry	$36
Stellar 7	$21
Stormovik	$15
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Thunderhawk	$32
Tracon 2	$43
Wing Commander 1	$39
WC1 Mission 1or 2	$19
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ILLUSTRATION BY DEVIS GREBU

New worlds beckon — in space, in the ocean, at the edges of science — and inside your home PC.

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EVERYONE'S A COLUMBUS AT HEART. WE RELISH the challenge of discovery. You can spend thousands heading up the Amazon, walking the veld of Africa, or climbing Asian peaks — or you can explore from the warm comfort of your family room for a lot less.

All you need is someone to guide your search for new worlds. That's just what several entertaining, yet educational, games for the PC provide. Games such as **Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs**; **Treasure Mountain!**; **The Oregon Trail**; and **Whales!** will pique the interest of the most jaded traveler, for they cram entire galaxies of discovery on a disk or two, and can transport you across the globe, even across time, in a digital flash.

Archenemies, surprising setbacks, and uncharted territories are mere inconveniences for diehard adventurers — whether in real life or in the magical world of computer games. Why not get a jump on the 500th anniversary of Columbus' first voyage with a little New World work — and fun — yourself? You don't need a Nina, a Pinta, or a Santa Maria. You don't even need shots!

By Cynthia E. Field

ADVENTURES UNLIMITED

Archetypal Adventures

Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs from PC Globe is a cheap ticket to hours of world-class gaming fun. In this global scavenger hunt, you search for 15 treasures hidden by the dastardly Otto von Slinkenrat, head of the PICKLE (Preserving Individual Cultures and Knowledge in Lands Everywhere) Foundation. Digging up the treasures is no snap, though, because Slinkenrat has squirreled them away in 206 cities scattered across 175 countries. The 400 possible treasures range from the authentic, such as the *koto* (a Japanese musical instrument), to the whimsical, such as a long-lost Rembrandt paint-by-number kit.

Bushbuck's colorful playing screen features keyed, topographic regional and world maps, and an array of 3-D buttons that call the program's options. Select the plane icon, for instance, to choose a destination and ready your aircraft for take-off.

Ordinary cities appear as tiny red crosses, while black squares frame the clue cities. Bushbuck's maps display available travel routes, and the animated graphics panel at the bottom of the screen tracks take-off, flight conditions, landing, and baggage handling. Turning off this animated scene

Fascinating tidbits: Bombay is the Hollywood of India, and Vlad the Impaler was better known as Dracula.

Bushbuck Charms

WACKY WORKING WORLDS

If you're looking for some bizarre moonlighting opportunities — in toy making or plumbing — join the crew of **NIGHT SHIFT** and **PIPE DREAM**, two environmentally correct arcade-action and puzzle-strategy products designed by LucasFilm.

Your first Night Shift starts here. Another 29 shifts await, each more madcap than the last.

We should talk. We've been fired more than a few times by shifty-eyed Frank Foreman, production manager at Industrial Might & Logic (IML), Night Shift's imaginary doll company.

Affectionately known as **BEAST** (Bingham's Environmentally Active Solution for Toys), IML's facility is a Rube Goldberg maze of landfill leavings that include a stationary bicycle (for generating power), a front-loading washer from a Chinese laundry (for mixing raw materials), a portable shower (for painting toys), and a boxing glove — for quality control, of course.

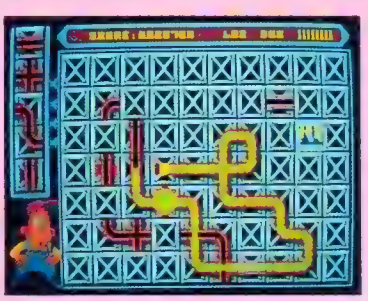
Your job — as coverall-clad Fred or Fiona Fixit — is to keep BEAST operating during each of 30 increasingly challenging work shifts so that you reach your doll quota without too many rejects. Each doll's a miniature replica of Darth Vader, Indiana Jones, or some other LucasFilm character.

Keeping BEAST running requires tools such as The Wrench (to tighten loose bolts), Your Hands (to flip switches or ride the exercycle), and The Balloon (to hitch a quick ride to the top of the BEAST).

If toy making doesn't fit in with your career goals, try pipe fitting. Pipe Dream, dubbed "the fast-flowing game of skill, strategy and plumbing," is destined to become an all-time favorite.

Thirty-six levels challenge even the most proficient plumber player. The object of the game is to connect sections to create a continuous pipeline that weaves its way around the screen. The pipe pieces you're given don't usually fit in sequence, so advance planning is required. You can blow up an ill-fitting pipe section, but that costs points. Unused sections littering the construction site reduce your final score, too.

Pipe fitting would be a piece of cake except for a pulsing flood of flooz — either soupy lime Jello or squished tomato juice (we just can't tell which) — coursing through the line. When flooz escapes, the game ends.



Keep laying pipe in Pipe Dream, or the flooz oozes out.

Like Night Shift, Pipe Dream features code-wheel copy protection and a two-player mode. Whether you play competitively or alone, toy making and pipe fitting are tough jobs. Of course, somebody's got to do them. — C.F.

speeds up the game, as does playing with a mouse instead of the keyboard.

When you arrive at a destination, an illustrated window pops up to show historical, geographical, and cultural facts about the city. Among hundreds of fascinating tidbits: Bombay is the Hollywood of India, and Vlad the Impaler was better known as Dracula.

Each leg of a trip costs one plane ticket.

Dazzling maps and 3-D buttons splash across your PC's screen when you go on a global scavenger hunt in Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs.

You begin with 40 to 60 tickets, the exact number depending on the game level you select. BushBuck awards bonus tickets randomly, but you may have to sacrifice some if you travel through damaging storms.

Depending on the level of difficulty, you can review clues by selecting the list icon, or you can glance at the color-coded thermometer to see whether you're homing in on a treasure. Locate it, return it safely to your city of origin, and rack up points.

Sound effects and themes from classical compositions spice up each game. You can play BushBuck alone, but it's more fun with either a friend or an electronic opponent: Pierre LeDroop, Natasha Derooshki, or von Slinkenrat himself. A world-map poster with a flip-side instruction guide substitutes nicely for traditional documentation.

Elfin Delights

Kids in the family can play in a mythical world of their own with **Treasure Mountain**!, a painlessly educational game from The Learning Company's Super Solver series. This pint-sized legendary land features a nemesis (Morty Maxwell, the Master of Mischief), obstacles (Puzzlers), and a helper (Flutter the Butterfly).

Arcade-style challenges abound. Pursue and catch elves for the gold coins you need to repair your net or redeem the kingdom's treasures. Learn to flip away from elf dust, climb steep ladders, and negotiate the Fish Fountain. A mouse makes elf catching, flipping, and climbing a lot easier.

Nab a scroll-carrying elf and he'll present a Puzzler, a multiple-choice question from school subjects such as arithmetic, language arts, or science. A Puzzler might ask you to add numbers, for instance, or select an antonym.

Adept adventurers face tougher Puzzlers, but the program repeats incorrectly answered questions. To make things easier, the program even dims or eliminates the wrong answers you've already tried.

Each correct answer wins you a descriptive clue such as *three*, *small*, or *square*. Match two clues with items along the mountain trail: If you run across three small sleds, for example, drop a coin to uncover the treasure hidden there. Drums, skateboards, candy canes, and other favorite things serve as treasures. If a treasure matches three clue words, you win the key that unlocks a passageway to the next level.

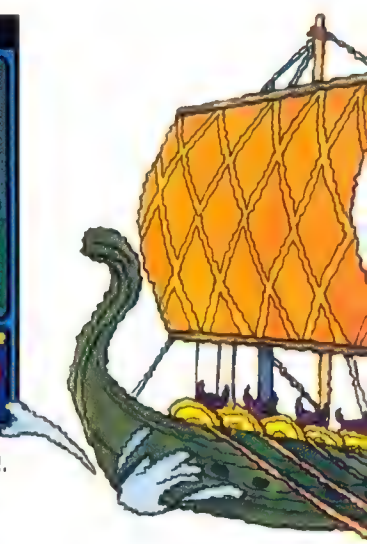
Carry your treasures to the Secret Stone

NAB a scroll-carrying elf and he'll present a puzzler.

Treasure Mountain

Drop a coin to move to the next level in Treasure Mountain!. (Note clue words at right and six pine cones in the tree.)

Tunnel at the mountain's top and climb the castle walls. But watch out: Morty tries to knock you down. Win a prize and slide down the Super Chute to base camp, where you



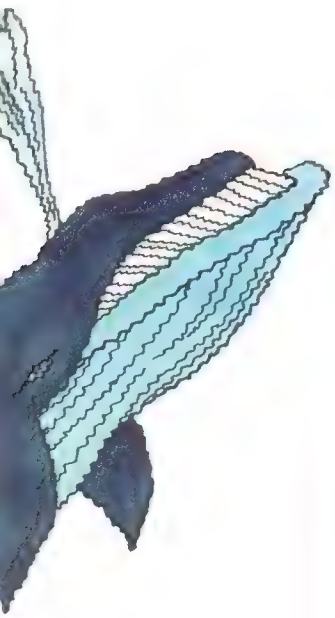
can animate your prize or play another round for more points.

With its brightly colored animated graphics and perky sound track, Treasure Mountain! is a delightful adventure game for kids aged 5 to 9. Its innovative blend of game and educational ingredients, spiced with a hefty dash of problem solving, sets Treasure Mountain apart from most other learning software.

Pioneering Spirits

Got an itch for the Old West? Then hitch up your covered wagon and try **The Oregon Trail**, a simulated adventure that sets you out on a 2000-mile electronic trek from Independence, Missouri, to Oregon City, Oregon. The year is 1848 and the lush Willamette Valley looks like the proverbial land of milk and honey.

You can pretend you're a well-heeled Boston banker, a hard-working Ohio carpenter, or a poor Illinois farmer. Bring along family members and companions but be sure to choose the right month — start too early and the rivers are too high, but wait too long and the snow in the Sierras may turn your party into a Donner look-alike. Despite limited startup funds, you need to buy supplies and spare parts



Climate can be a mortal enemy, so check your supplies and health frequently.

The Oregon Trail

Kid Stuff

If your kids are adventurous types, Broderbund has just released two products you won't want to miss.

First, the notorious Carmen Sandiego is on the loose again as she appears in her fifth software mystery. In recent years, young gamers have chased Carmen across America and Europe, around the world, and even into ancient civilizations. This time, **WHERE IN AMERICA'S PAST IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?** ($59.95) takes both kids and adults through 400 years of American history.

Carmen tackles American history.

You're searching for clues to help nab the elusive Carmen, of course — clues buried amid a mound of information on American science, art, music, theater, philosophy, sports, fashion, folkways, religions, and politics.

Where in America's Past comes with a copy of Happened When, a 1300-page encyclopedia of American history and culture. Digitized images of artwork and photographs from different eras add to the realism.

If you'd rather have your kids stay a little closer to home, **THE TREEHOUSE** (price not available at press time) provides excitement and learning without requiring your young players to "branch out" too far on their own.

The Treehouse is designed for youngsters between the ages of 5 and 9. In this treetop hideaway, kids encounter games that help them discover the wonders of music, science, math, language, art, logic, and much more.

The Treehouse possum teaches the basics.

Serving as guides are "Awesome Possums." Younsters can choose to play with either the boy or the girl possum, equally cuddly.

Best of all, the possum talks back — he or she may ask to be fed, to take a nap, or to play a game with your kids.

Youngsters can play with mouse, joystick, or keyboard. Six objects lead him or her on to learning activities. Puppet Theater focuses on language and dramatic arts; Road Rally emphasizes math; Musical Keys and Musical Maze teach kids the fundamentals of "the universal language"; and Animal Album and Guess My Animal concentrate on science.

A Parent's Guide and a Teacher's Guide are included. To keep things from getting out of hand, you can control features such as sound and volume levels, access to printers, and levels of difficulty.

For more information on Where in America's Past Is Carmen Sandiego? or The Treehouse, contact Broderbund Software at 17 Paul Drive, San Rafael, CA 94903-2101, (415) 492-3200.

— Dan Muse

before you begin — no supermarkets in the wilderness, remember.

Along the trail you'll encounter a host of problems, from broken wagon tongues and lame oxen to cholera-stricken passengers and night-raiding thieves. You can chat with other pioneers, but some of their advice may be worthless.

Climate can be a mortal enemy — slowing

You're heading west on the Oregon Trail, ready to take on the dangers and decisions of a real pioneer.

you down for days on end — so check your supplies and health frequently. Do you dare rest a day or two, at the risk of crossing the Rocky Mountains in the dead of winter?

Eventually, you'll need to hunt to supplement the food you bought or earned in trade from friendly Native Americans. Aim and shoot your rifle accurately (a joystick works great here), but kill only what you need — no sense wasting precious bullets. When you reach a fort, seek advice, barter for goods (if someone's willing), or if you have the cash, buy more supplies.

On the last leg of the trip, you can try rafting down the rapids of the Columbia River. Maneuvering skillfully using the joystick or the cursor keys to avoid running aground on the riverbank or smashing into rocks. Your final score reflects the number of healthy survivors and the amount of supplies and cash you have left when (or if) you reach the end of the trail.

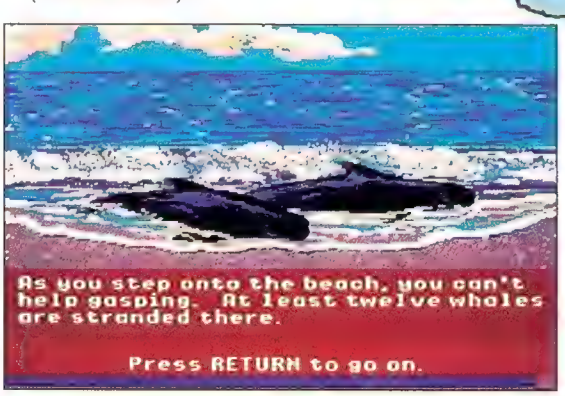
Popular 19th-century tunes such as *Jimmy Crack Corn* and *Skip to My Lou* accompany full-screen illustrations depicting landmarks and forts along the trail. Realistic yet fun, The Oregon Trail opens your eyes to the decisions, and risks, forced on American pioneers.

Thar She Blows!

Modern-day explorers can set sail for realistic scientific expeditions with **Whales!**, a collaborative effort of the National Audubon Society and Top Ten Software. Whales! packs four activities under one title: *Whale Tracker*, *Secrets of Hosea Freeman*, *Whale Rescue*, and *Manatee Hotline*.

Whale Tracker puts you in the deck shoes of a novice assistant to Dr. Bill Martinez on the research vessel *Mary Clyde*. Your assignment's to photograph whales and record their sounds. When whales "breach," or leap out of the water, during each animated game you "shoot" them with your camera and identify them with the help of 13 computerized data cards.

Each two-page database record includes an illustration of a whale and information about its anatomical markings, feeding preferences, and migratory habits. The animal's scientific name and facts pertaining to its dives and sounds round out the card. You can sort the database and view only those cards describing baleen (filter-feeding) whales, such as the blue whale, or cards about dorsal-finned whales, such as the orca (killer whale).

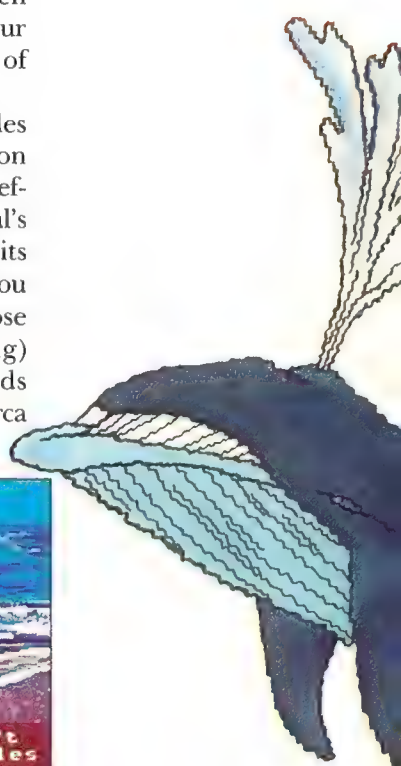


Stranded whales! And it's up to you to save them.

In *Secrets of Hosea Freeman*, an interactive mystery game, you move into a 19th-century sea captain's home in New Bedford, Massachusetts, to search for things such as a magic gold coin and a whaler's log book.

The program's sound effects transport you under the ocean, beside the leviathans.

Whales



Your job is to purge the guilt-ridden ghost of Hosea Freeman from the house.

Whale Rescue focuses on a more down-to-earth concern — saving a whale that's stranded, or beached, itself. You first identify the whale, then decide on your best course of action. *Manatee Hotline* asks your help in protecting endangered marine mammals in Florida.

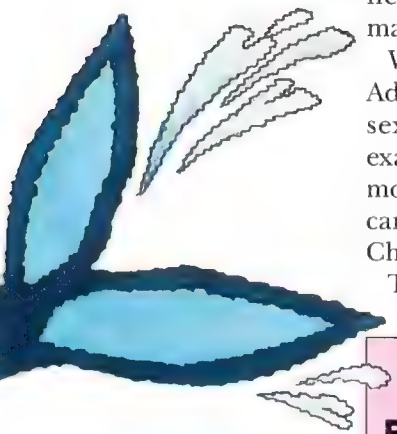
Whales!, like other Audubon Wildlife Adventures, is culturally sensitive and non-sexist. African American children, for example, won't feel left out, thanks to role-model veterinarian Dr. Leon Johnson; girls can identify with characters such as Elly Chen, a marine biologist.

The program's sound effects — including eerie whale songs that sound real even coming from a PC — transport you under the ocean, beside the leviathans.

PC Journeys

Thanks to creative game makers, today's Magellans, Livingstons, and Amundsens can have fun exploring worlds both past and present, real and make-believe. Why wait? Embark now on your journey of discovery. All it takes is a PC and some exploratory games to open windows on new worlds.

With a little bit of luck you'll make it home from your first adventure faster than you can say "Queen Isabella"! ❑



All it takes is a PC and some exploratory games to open windows on new worlds.

PRODUCT INFORMATION

Bushbuck Charms, Viking Ships & Dodo Eggs

PC Globe
4700 South McClintock
Tempe, AZ 85282
(602) 730-9000
$49.95
512K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
Hercules monochrome, CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color
DOS version 2.0 or higher
supports AbLib sound card
supports mouse, keyboard

Night Shift

LucasFilm Games
Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171
$24.95
512K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
EGA, 16-color MCGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color (640K RAM)
supports AdLib, Sound Blaster sound cards
joystick recommended

The Oregon Trail

MECC
3490 Lexinton Ave. North
Saint Paul, MN 55126-8097
(612) 481-3500
$49.95
512K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA
DOS version 2.1 or higher
supports joystick for selected features

Pipe Dream

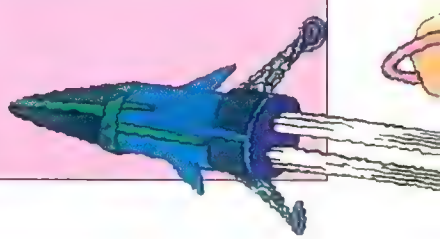
LucasFilm Games
Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
San Mateo, CA 94404
(415) 571-7171
$24.95
256K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
Hercules, CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color
supports AdLib, Sound Blaster sound cards
joystick or mouse recommended

Treasure Mountain!

The Learning Company
6493 Kaiser Drive
Fremont, CA 94555
(800) 852-2255
$49.95
512K IBM PC and compatibles, 640K Tandy
CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color
DOS 2.0 or higher
supports AdLib, Sound Blaster sound cards
supports mouse and keyboard

Whales!

Top Ten Software
40308 Greenwood Way
Oakhurst, CA 93644
(209) 683-7577
$49.95
512K IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles
CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA
DOS 2.0 or higher
supports mouse, keyboard



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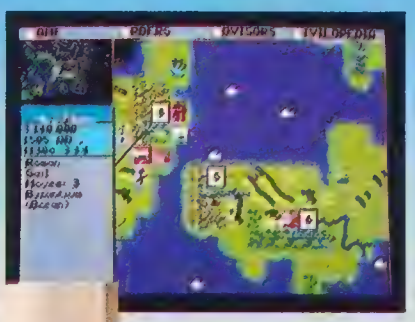

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HEART OF CHINA

By Peter Olafson

Heart of China beats strong. This living storybook — a massive and vibrant save-the-girl tale of high adventure in the mysterious East — is packed with people to meet, things to pick up, and places to go, all rendered in glorious VGA on your PC screen. You're going to love it.

Indiana Who?

I think they shop at the same store, but that other guy has a hat and a degree. Heart of China features Jake "Lucky" Masters. It's the 1930s, he's a blustery and not-too-bright hero pilot from World War I (as he keeps reminding us) who's been hired to rescue a rich man's daughter from warlord Li Deng.

Along the way, he and his companions use their wits to get in and out of a fortress, drive a tank, fight atop a speeding train, cure snakebite, get caught and get rescued, and probably die a fair number of times. Action hauls them and you along, from Hong Kong to Katmandu to Istanbul and the Orient Express.

Heart of China uses a mouse-driven, click-and-drag game system similar to Dynamix's earlier, futuristic Rise of the Dragon — with two major additions. For one thing, the game uses actors, some 85 of them, instead of drawings. For another, you control three characters, not one, and the trio must work together.

The game is also notably bigger than its predecessor, both in required hard-disk space (8.7 megabytes) and in game play. Alternate solutions to game problems camouflage its true size. For instance, at one point you'll find yourself in the bushes outside the warlord's fortress. There are two ways to get in, two ways to start the tank to break out, and two ways to open the panel to hot-wire the tank if you left the keys behind. (Kids, don't try this at home.) This gameplay density makes Heart of China a joy to play. You never know what you're going to find next — or what you just missed. Once conquered, the game almost demands a replay just to explore and experiment.

Feats of derring-do are your specialty when you step into the shoes of Jake Masters in Heart of China.

Heart of China also includes a pair of arcade sequences. You can bypass them if you're better with your brain than your wrists, but at least take a look at the three-dimensional tank game. Much more than just a game sequence, driving this World War I-era monster from the mountain fortress to the plane is a full subgame that fits cleanly with the rest of the adventure, but also compares to stand-alone commercial products on the market. The other arcade interlude is a beautiful, but rather ordinary, slugfest — too bad Dynamix didn't match the tank's glory with this one.

Even the more-or-less static screens can come to life if you turn up the detail level. In a flight simulator, that typically means a more complex rendering, and so it is here. In Heart of China, all the nuances in this nuance-filled game flicker with activity: signs waving, papers blowing, people working, birds being shot down with arrows.

Finally, give credit to designer Jeff Tunnell for handing Kate Lomax, the female lead, a decent role. She's vital once you reach Istanbul, and isn't simply some reward for Lucky's

success, as is too common in these kinds of computer games.

Plot Forks Here

Heart of China's only error is its display of plot branches, those places where the story can separate and go various ways. It's terrific that there are several ways to finish the story. It's not so terrific that the game throws up a little signpost and the flashing words *Plot branch* every time you reach a fork in the storyline. That's the sort of thing that deserves mention in the documentation, but not in the game proper, where it serves mainly to puncture the player's suspension of disbelief. It's as if someone turned on the lights in the movie theater.

Otherwise, this was love at first sight, and still love weeks later. Heart of China succeeds splendidly.

Dynamix (a Sierra company), P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614, (800) 326-6654; IBM PC and compatibles; 640K RAM; VGA (separate 16- and 256-color packages); hard-disk drive required; 80286 microprocessor or better; supports Roland MT-32, LAPC-1, CM-32L, AdLib, Sound Blaster, PS/1 Sound Adaptor sound boards; mouse or joystick recommended

SOUND SOURCE

By Carol Holzberg

Mickey talks, Minnie squeaks, and Donald . . . well, Donald Duck yammers like a verbal jackhammer gone berserk.

These Disney characters sound off thanks to Sound Source, Disney Software's new add-on device that delivers high-quality audio for an unbelievably low price, producing music, sound effects, and speech to rival the more expensive Sound Blaster and Roland LAPC-1 audio boards. Yet Sound Source retails for only $34.95, and you don't even have to pop the top of your computer to hook it up.

Plug and Go

Sound Source needs no internal slot, a big plus for PC owners whose systems are already filled with video, game-port, and disk-controller cards. Sound Source plugs into the parallel port at the back of your PC, where you normally connect your printer. Don't worry — you simply plug your parallel-printer cable into the Sound Source Converter and use the printer as before. The only tool you need is a flat-blade screwdriver. Depending on your PC, though, you may have to disconnect other cables to make the Sound Source connector fit.

You don't need to hunt for an electrical outlet, either. Sound Source uses a 9-volt battery (not included), and thanks to a battery-saving feature that turns the unit off automatically when it's not in use, there's no need for an ON switch. A red indicator at the top of the box lights up to tell you Sound Source-compatible software has located the device.

The compact Sound Source measures 6 by 7 by 2 inches, so putting it on the desktop beside your computer is a snap. Two feet of cable between the box and the connector give you some room to maneuver, although people with PCs under the desk may have trouble placing Sound Source within reach. A volume control on the front and a headphone jack on the side complete its external elements. Inside the plastic box are a 3.5-inch speaker and an 8-bit DAC (digital-to-analog converter) chip that transforms digital signals into analog sounds such as speech and music. The Sound Source DAC is outfitted with a 16-byte buffer to allow faster animation; it reduces the number of times a program must be interrupted to send a sound to the peripheral.

Sound Source is a plug-and-play sound add-on for your PC that's simple to install and provides high-quality sound, speech, and music.

With this built-in DAC chip, Sound Source has both music and speech capabilities. Any sound that can be digitized can be recorded and played back through Sound Source. While Disney's technology doesn't produce stereophonic sound, it's capable of processing multiple audio effects through the speaker simultaneously. In fact, Disney software usually plays sound and music through the

computer's internal speaker, putting digitized sounds through Sound Source at the same time.

Disney Software developed Sound Source jointly with Electronic Speech Systems of Hayward, California. ESS contributed its sound-compression technology, dramatically increasing the amount of sound developers can fit on a 360K disk. Disney claims that ESS technology allows a compression ratio of 10 to 1 without any degradation of audio quality.

A Sound Investment

Sound Source blazes new sound trails with Disney preschool packages such as Mickey's ABCs: A Day at the Fair; Mickey's Colors and Shapes: The Dazzling Magic Show; and Mickey's 123s: The Big Surprise Party. Each program features Mickey and other Disney characters in colorfully animated preschool skill-building exercises. Run the software without Sound Source and it's like watching a silent movie. Plug in Sound Source and you hear high-quality music, sound effects, spoken instructions, and familiar Disney character voices. The difference is like night and day. Without Sound Source, the software is simply drab.

Sound Source can't be beat on price or capabilities. An AdLib card costs around $100 via mail order and gives you a monophonic music synthesizer with no possibility of speech. Sound Blaster provides stereophonic game sounds and speech, but sells direct for about $150. Both boards make you open your computer during installation and take up a precious slot.

Sound Source's major flaw is that so few programs currently take advantage of its technology. Other than the Mickey Mouse preschool packages and some Disney games such as Arachnophobia and Dick Tracy, compatible software is still scarce. This will change only as Disney and other developers include Sound Source support in their games and educational programs. One heartening note is that plans are in the works to develop software that uses both Sound Source and an AdLib (or compatible) music card. For the moment, though, consider Sound Source a perfectly sound investment for compatible Disney software.

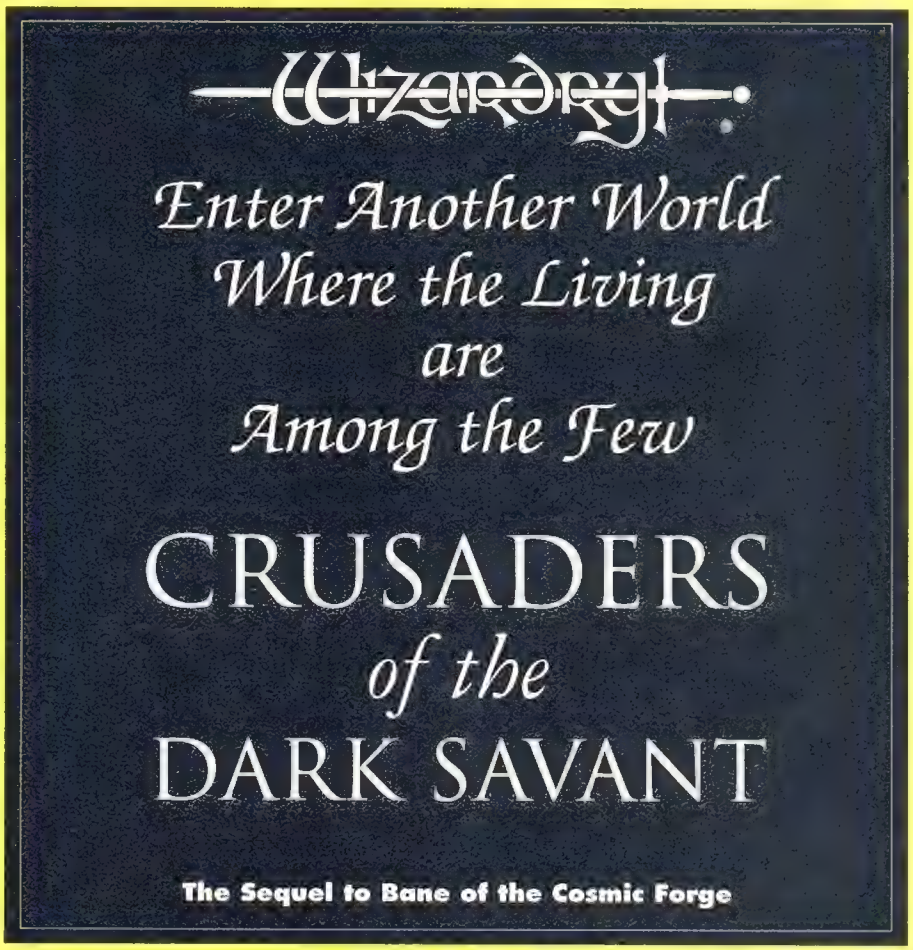
Walt Disney Computer Software, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521, (818) 567-5360; IBM PC and compatibles with parallel printer port (adapter available for Tandy 1000 computers); $39.95

LEMMINGS

By Cameron Crotty

Raising kids is hell — a lifelong commitment to crisis management. Just consider the average 2-year-old. *Get away from that electric outlet. Stop it. Put down those scissors. Don't you know you can put your eye out with that?* But as soon as you turn your back, he's at it again. Sometimes it seems you have to threaten life and limb to keep him safe and sound.

If you've met the challenge of children and won, you've experienced a taste — and only a taste — of the trouble you'll get from Lemmings. Lemmings are short, they've got green hair, and they have a nasty talent for self-destruction. They can't help it, not really. They're so incredibly stupid that they'll drop into world after world filled with pits, walls, stones, lakes, acid baths, flames, and traps, never once learning from the experience. All they know how to do is walk in a straight line and reverse direction when they bump into something. To save them, you must imbue certain Lemmings with special abilities, clearing a path to safety for the rest. The concept is



Circle 61 on Reader Service Card.

simple, the execution is taxing, and the game is addictive.

Hey, Stupid!

Round after round of applause should go to the folks at DMA Design, creators of Lemmings, for their painstaking attention to detail. Every screen is a pleasure to look at — well illustrated and filled with eye-catching color. Though Lemmings are tiny screen creatures only 15 to 20 pixels high, fluid animation and tiny idiosyncrasies bring them to life. A miner (a diagonal digger) swings a tiny pick, a blocker taps his foot impatiently, a basher (a horizontal digger) slugs his way through anything he's aimed at, and even the walkers bounce along, hair waving in the breeze.

Dazzling graphics and challenging puzzles make playing Lemmings addictive fun.

But don't be fooled by the shiny surface. Beneath this dazzling graphics skin lies a fiendishly challenging puzzle. Lemmings offers four levels of difficulty, ranging from "Fun" to "Mayhem"; each level exterminates Lemmings through 30 screens. As you work your way through them, terrain becomes more challenging, time gets tighter, and you're handed fewer resources to help your charges. You must also save a higher percentage of Lemmings.

Lemmings is essentially a peaceful and life-affirming game: Rather than spend your time wreaking havoc with laser beams, you save imaginary creatures from near-certain death. Your success or failure, however, is measured by whether or not you save a certain number of Lemmings; any extra Lemmings beyond that cutoff are just that — extra. And to complete most levels, you must blow up some Lemmings — the blockers that prevent the rest of the little creatures from walking off a cliff or into a trap. In fact, you're given a special tool for just this purpose. Sometimes it's the only tool you have, forcing you to make your way through a screen by turning Lemmings into walking time bombs. Worse, the explosion sequence is entertaining. Although this isn't a serious shortcoming in the game, considering the more explicit death-ray/alien/blood-kill-kill-kill stuff that floods the game market, it's not exactly politically correct.

Get Protective

The game's mechanics are sensible: You'll play better with a mouse, but you won't sacrifice much if you use a joystick instead. The VGA graphics images are nothing less than staggering, and the animation remains smooth and entertaining even in CGA. I played the game on an early-model PS/2, but options are offered at startup for faster and slower machines, and for PC compatibles. The manual describes a two-player option, but that's only available on the Amiga — a shame.

Buy Lemmings. It's original, challenging, and fun. These critters may be dumb, but it won't take long for you to start feeling protective — they're just too cute. Watch yourself. You might even catch yourself humming a few bars of *Let My People Go*.

Psygnosis, Ltd., 29 St. Mary's Court, Brookline, MA 02146, (617) 731-3553; IBM PC, XT, AT, PS/2, Tandy, and compatibles; 512K RAM; CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster sound boards; mouse recommended; supports joystick, keyboard; copy protection (key disk); $49.99

LINKS: THE CHALLENGE OF GOLF

By Lafe Low

No waiting, no duffers, no carts that decide to head for the water hazard. Those are the only things missing from Links: The Challenge of Golf, one of the most realistic and panoramic golf games to hit for the pin in years. Whether you're skillfully positioning a drive down a narrow tree-lined fairway or artfully lofting a shot onto the green from deep within a bunker, Links makes you forget you're sitting in front of your PC.

Putting in Links is tough, but the grid helps show how the green breaks.

Links captures every challenge in a real round of golf. You do it all: select the right club, aim and hit your shot, adjust your stance, open and close the club face, and draw or fade the ball. Make the right decisions or you'll end up in the rough.

From your first swing on the first tee of Torrey Pines, Links looks, sounds, and feels as close to real golf as you can imagine. The fairway views, the spectacular digitized graphics, and the RealSound effects make it easy to pretend there's grass under your feet instead of carpet.

Links' realism shows itself in other, less euphoric ways, too. Because it's so realistic, it's not easy to pop your first drive straight down the fairway. But Links is also more forgiving than real golf. You can fire off as many mulligans as you like without the rest of your party grumbling about the wait.

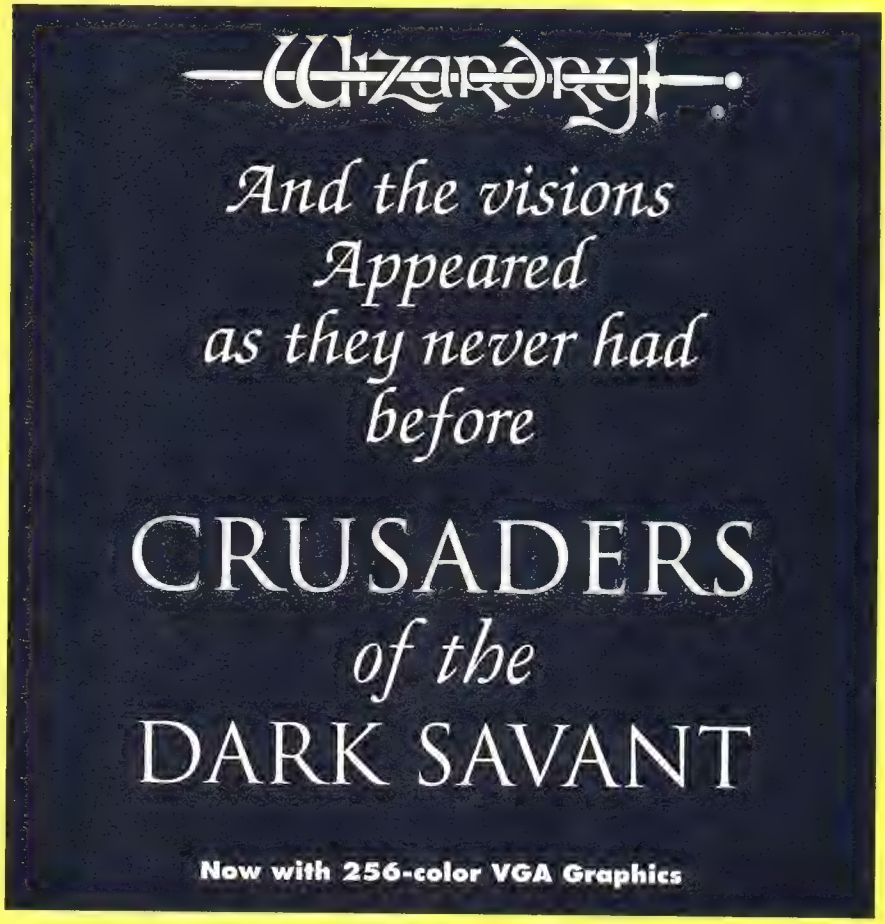
Space-Age Golf

Get a group of friends around the PC and put together a foursome, or have the course all to yourself. Start up Links and you'll see a view of the fairway and a control bar along the bottom of the screen. You may think the control bar resembles a space shuttle's console. Don't worry — it looks confusing at first glance, but that's just because of all the options.

At the center of the panel is the all-important swing indicator. Like most PC golf games, Links uses a three-stage system to hit the ball. A power meter starts clockwise around a dial at the first click of the mouse button. Release the mouse button to start the downswing, then click once more at the bottom to nail the shot, or to send the ball into a nasty hook or a vicious slice. If you've played other computer golf games, you won't have any trouble with Links. If you're new to PC golf, spend some practice time before you go for the green with gusto.

Besides controlling the power and accuracy of your swing, you can opt to send your shot straight or throw in an intentional draw or fade if you need to bank your shot around a dogleg or an obstacle. This comes in handy on some of the twisting fairways of Torrey Pines.

A status screen appears after each shot to tell you how far your ball flew, its total distance, how far it is from



Circle 61 on Reader Service Card.

the pin, and where you lie. You can go on to the next shot or the next player, see a replay, or even take a mulligan. Those last two options are worth their weight in titlists. The game's instant replays are wonderful; you can watch from your own vantage point, or as seen from an imaginary spectator near the spot where your ball landed. Mulligans can save you from those disastrous situations that so often ruin real golf for weekend players, and let you play an enjoyable, stress-free round of PC golf.

Putting, often the toughest part of simulated, and real, golf, takes practice in Links. A superimposed grid helps by showing you the breaks and terrain, but it's still a challenge to judge distance accurately when you line up behind the ball.

Reality Redrawn

While Links' digitized scenery looks as close to the real stuff as you could hope for on a PC, screens do take time to redraw. It isn't cumbersome, but if you have a slow PC or if you're really itching to get to the next tee, you can change the level of detail.

Although Links comes with only one course, you won't tire quickly of Torrey Pines. Once you've mastered those 18 holes, though, you can choose from a number of extra course disks. Three additional courses are currently available — the Bountiful (Utah) Municipal Golf Course (not a world-class course, but Access Software, Links' publisher, once had an office not far from there), the Bay Hill Club and Lodge (Florida), and the Firestone Country Club (Ohio). Each course costs $24.95. When you register as a Links owner, Access keeps you posted as new course disks become available.

Links' version of golf and my real game are quite similar, a noteworthy compliment when you're talking about simulating an entire sport on a 14-inch PC monitor. The detail is simply impressive. When the weather turns foul, when you can't find a golf partner, or when your brother borrows your clubs without asking, a round of Links should satisfy your need to swing a club.

Access Software, 4910 West Amelia Earhart Drive, Salt Lake City, UT 84116, (801) 359-2900; IBM AT, 286, 286, PS/1, PS/2, and compatibles; 640K RAM; VGA, MCGA; hard-disk drive recommended; supports AdLib, IBM PS/2 Speech Adaptor, Sound Blaster, MSound sound boards; supports keyboard, joystick; mouse recommended; no copy protection; $59.95

EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

BANE OF THE COSMIC FORGE

By Bernie Yee

Arrows fly through the air. Spells whiz through space. You go toe to toe with doom and destruction, and laugh at death as it stares you in the face.

For a first-person view of adventure, one that puts you in harm's way only on the computer screen, you can't do much better than to fire up one of two role-playing games from a pair of veteran publishers.

SSI's newest line of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons role-playing games (RPGs) faces off against a giant in its own right, Sir-Tech Software's new Wizardry series. Though Eye of the Beholder and Bane of the Cosmic Forge carry the moniker of their respective companies' previous PC RPGs, both games are, in fact, built on completely new systems.

Although some earlier MS-DOS RPGs offered a limited first-person view, the monster portraits were static and you never saw weapons and incantations zip through the air. No more. Both Eye of the Beholder and Bane of the Cosmic Forge promise a realistic dungeon experience, complete with creepy sounds, leaping dwarves, and soaring arrows.

Both games deliver, but with different results. Both games offer a true first-person viewpoint of the hard-bitten adventurer, a maze replete with strange noises, and animation to boot. But the similarities end there.

A Different Path to the Waterfall

Bane of the Cosmic Forge kicks off a new round of Wizardry games with a whole slew of adventure skills, 77 new spells, and two new character classes. More of a quantum leap than a simple step up from Wizardry, Bane should still be familiar to veteran adventurers. You control movement with the PC's arrow keys, picking locks, disarming traps, and fighting monsters. Your mission is to discover what happened to the Cosmic Forge, a magical pen that made whatever was written come true — but at a terrible cost to the writer. As you explore a castle — home to the evil king and wizard who combined forces to locate and use the pen — you'll encounter monsters and the restless spirits of former inhabitants. Packed with an incredible amount of detail and a unique and well-balanced magic system based on spell points, Bane provides a story that's exceptionally engaging, full of well-written prose that takes you from the dungeon to the River Styx (complete with a boat ride with Charon), and beyond.

Eye of the Beholder, meanwhile, drops you and your characters into the sewers of Waterdeep. Reassuringly comfortable to longtime AD&D players, Eye of the Beholder features the widely known "2nd Edition" rules. As you investigate the sewers for a criminal

Eye of the Beholder delivers a knockout punch with its 256-color VGA graphics.

conspiracy — and the evil one behind it all — you'll come to depend on the game's interface and direction icons. Kibolds, spiders, and worse populate this underground ruin. The mouse-driven, icon-based game play works well, and is easy to master.

Both games toss you into the dungeon and close the door, permanently, behind you. Unlike classics such as Ultima and Bard's Tale, there's no town, tavern, or shops, no real outdoors or wilderness.

As for pure graphics splendor, it's no contest. Eye of the Beholder delivers a knockout punch in full 256-color VGA. The walls, doors, monsters, and spells are all woven in rich colors and graphics. By comparison, Bane of the Cosmic Forge seems tepid. Its graphics images are nice, but they're constrained by the limits of the game's EGA graphics. Sir-Tech promises 256-color VGA for Bane's upcoming sequel.

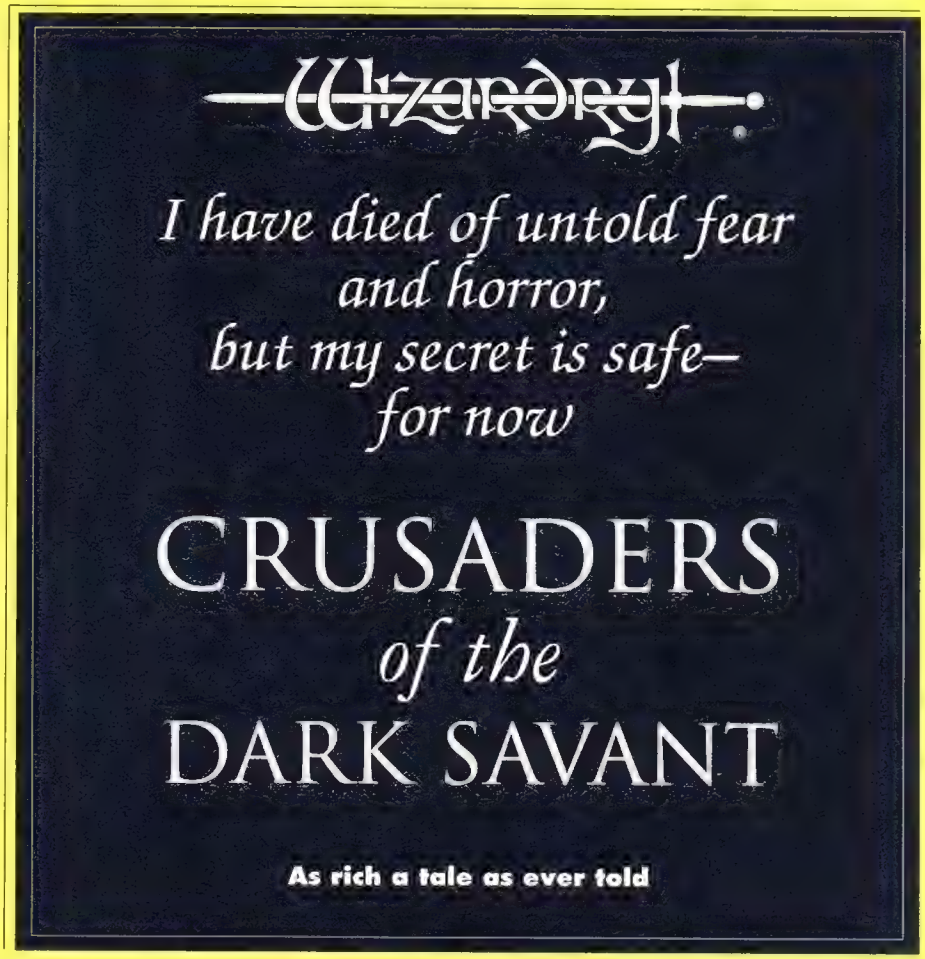
But Bane of the Cosmic Forge has more monster animation than its competitor. Even so, I didn't notice the absence, because each of Eye's monsters looks even better than the illustrations in the AD&D manuals. Both games feature digitized sounds (and support sound boards), from Bane's creaking doors and clanging swords to Eye's water drops and spider clicks. In fact, that sound of approaching spiders made me nervous.

Eye of the Beholder also has it over Bane of the Cosmic Forge in another area: its icon-driven object-management system. An item dropped stays there, in full view, on the cold dungeon floor. A mace on the ground looks like a mace. You can drag it into a character's inventory in icon form with a mouse and even manipulate dungeon features such as levers or buttons simply by clicking on them. Sadly, Bane of the Cosmic Forge falls into the old trap of the dungeon abyss — a dropped item is lost forever. Still, Bane of the Cosmic Forge is user friendly; it won't let you drop items necessary to your quest.

Come Out Swinging

But before you run out and buy Eye of the Beholder, wait. Eye of the Beholder may look pretty, but Bane of the Cosmic Forge plays pretty. That's a big, big difference.

Eye of the Beholder implements the AD&D game system. Though that works arguably well on paper, Bane of the Cosmic Forge goes one better,



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because it's written specifically for the computer, not for paper play. In all, Bane of the Cosmic Forge's system feels better rounded. The most noticeable area is in non-player character interaction. You can talk to the characters through a full-sentence parser in Bane of the Cosmic Forge. Eye of the Beholder allows only limited menu-type interaction, and seems to have fewer encounters with non-player characters.

Animated monsters greet you when you step into Bane of the Cosmic Forge.

Bane of the Cosmic Forge shows just enough complexity without bogging you down in statistics and charts. It includes an immense and well-researched list of weapons and armor. In contrast, Eye of the Beholder carries AD&D's familiar, but small, weapons list. Bane of the Cosmic Forge gets similarly high marks for dungeon design. While Eye of the Beholder builds each dungeon level around a 32-by-32 grid, Bane of the Cosmic Forge has different shapes for different types of dungeons. And it simply feels much larger, owing in large part to some nice touches, such as grates and doors you can never open, leaving you thinking there's much more than you ever see.

Game play in Bane of the Cosmic Forge is exceptionally well balanced. Eye of the Beholder falls short here, too. Though Eye of the Beholder has a thief class, the thief is relatively useless. Such stealing skills are much more useful in Bane of the Cosmic Forge. In fact, it's downright necessary in the beginning to open trapped chests.

In puzzles, plot line, and combat system, Bane of the Cosmic Forge gets top honors. Eye of the Beholder often features puzzles that simply run characters around, while Bane's fit neatly into its storyline. Bane's plot is also subtler and more interesting, not just a lead-up to the ubiquitous final confrontation. Bane's combat harkens back to the traditional round, in which you choose different options depending on your weapons. Eye of the Beholder takes a different approach, resulting in a real-time combat system that's simplistic and almost arcade-like. Although that may be more realistic, many gamers will prefer the round-combat system. Your characters' fate should be determined by their dexterity with a sword, not your dexterity with a mouse. Similar complaints can be leveled at Eye of the Beholder's secret buttons on the walls, left for you, not your character, to find. This is a perfect example of Eye of the Beholder's great graphics but questionable game design.

Eye of the Beholder's strengths — graphics and object management — are Bane's weaknesses. And Bane of the Cosmic Forge's strengths — game play and storyline — are Eye's weaknesses. Both are well worth playing, though Bane of the Cosmic Forge has more overall appeal.

Yet Sir-Tech's soon-to-be-released sequel to Bane sports a slick, even stunning full-VGA, icon-driven, mouse-style interface atop a complex storyline. Another round of adventure-game competition is about to heat up, and this time it looks like it's SSI's turn to answer the call.

Eye of the Beholder; Strategic Simulations, 675 Almanor Avenue, Suite 201, Sunnyvale, CA 94086, (408) 737-6800; IBM PC and compatibles; 640K RAM; CGA, EGA, VGA, MCGA (256-color), Tandy 16-color; supports AdLib, SoundBlaster sound boards; mouse recommended; $49.95

Bane of the Cosmic Forge; Sir-Tech Software, P.O. Box 245, Ogdensburg Business Center, Suite 2E, Ogdensburg, NY 13669, (315) 393-6644; IBM PC and compatibles; 640K RAM; two floppy drives or hard-disk drive required; monochrome, CGA, EGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, Sound Master, VoiceMaster sound boards; $59.95

SIMEARTH

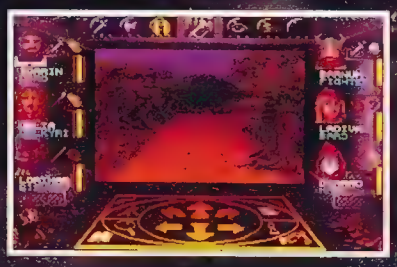
By Wes Nihei

Is this a random world, or did you planet? Only SimEarth offers an answer. Not a game, but a planet simulator, SimEarth builds worlds, then lets you tinker. Using a complex set of controls, you create and manipulate a planetary environment, trying to keep life going long enough to see it gain intelligence and develop into a civilization.

Wizardry!

A Fantasy Role-Playing Simulation by D.W. Bradley

CRUSADERS *of the* DARK SAVANT



Welcome to the sequel to Bane of the Cosmic Forge and the only game that could possibly follow its lead. It's everything Bane was...and more.

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SimEarth recklessly hands you eight worlds to play with: Six present gaming challenges, one illustrates the Gaia theory, and another is a world-making laboratory where you build a planet from scratch. It's alive!

All's not simple in SimEarth paradise, of course. Creators have problems, too — big ones, in fact. What if the world gets too warm? Why is life dying out on land? And how can the SimEarthlings cope with such classics as famine, pestilence, war, and pollution? If you don't know, no one does.

The basic premise underlying SimEarth comes from James Lovelock's aforementioned Gaia theory. This holistic view hypothesizes that our planet's living organisms and environment together constitute a system capable of self-regulating climate and atmospheric conditions. SimEarth lets you put the theory to some tough tests. If you can't kill a planet in this program, no one can.

World Tools

Building a world's no snap, and SimEarth reflects this predicament. As a dynamic simulation, SimEarth attempts to put all the pieces and parts that make up a world at your fingertips. That's no mean feat, and goes a long way in explaining the program's complexity.

SimEarth uses a point-and-click interface with windows, menus, and icons. Positioning the nine major windows on screen, then learning what all the menus and icons represent, are your first SimEarth challenges.

If you stick to SimEarth's game planets, you'll live most of your life in the *Edit* window. Here you display a localized view of a specific portion of your world — part of a continent, say, or a section of the ocean. Six key icons, three of which have submenus — *Place Life*, *Trigger Events*, *Plant Biomes*, *Set Altitude*, *Move*, and *Examine* — help you make planets.

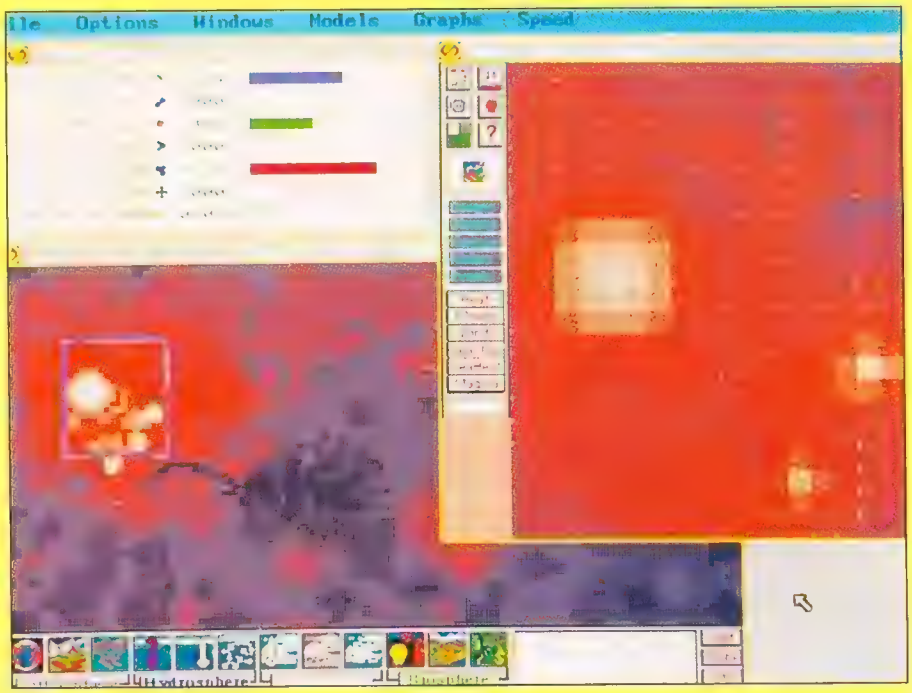
Place Life lets you establish 15 classes of life, which ranging from single-celled prokaryotes to mammals and cetaceans, and 240 different species anywhere in your world. Any class (even insects and dinosaurs) can evolve into a sentient species.

Use *Plant Biomes* to establish ecological communities of plants and animals. You get eight choices, including arctic, desert, forest, jungle, and swamp. Though you can place these anywhere you like, whether they stay there depends on environmental factors such as altitude, temperature, and rainfall.

Trigger Events accesses tools you can use to shape your world, things most of us call natural disasters and catastrophic events. Fire up a volcano to build a land mass, start a meteor shower to extinguish life, or drop atomic bombs to halt the spread of civilization.

The other icons access useful, albeit less complex, tools. *Set Altitude* just makes the sky fall or rise — it's an easy way to build an island or make oceans disappear. *Move* repositions biomes, animal life, or cities around the planet, while *Examine* displays a quick report on biomes, life, and cities in a specific area of the planet.

Mastering the *Edit* window is the key to success in SimEarth. But the simulator doesn't stop there: You can affect the geology, the atmosphere, and all life and civilization with the program's *Model Control Panels*, labeled *Geosphere*, *Atmosphere*, *Biosphere*, and *Civilization*. These functions let you alter the basic model that controls the program's planetary simulations. Of course, modifying cloud formation, continental drift, or reproduction rates may sound like mere planetary puttering, but they can have catastrophic results over millions of years.



From atmospheric activity to the origin of life, you create it all with SimEarth.

Earth Shaking

If SimEarth sounds complex, it is. But once you master its fundamentals you can bypass the intricacies of earth-science theory and dive into a fascinating array of world building. You can play in three regular game modes — easy, medium, and hard — plus an experimental mode. In the game modes, you try to develop, manage, and preserve your planet within certain allotted energy budgets. In experimental mode, your

Another Eastern block falls.

There's a new 'TRIS on the block. Its name is WORDTRIS. And if you love TETRIS, this latest fast-action, falling block, Soviet game will boggle your mind.

This time the falling pieces are letter blocks. Form them into words and score points. As each block falls, it pushes down the blocks below, producing an ever-changing kaleidoscope of letters where scoring opportunities appear - and vanish - at the blink of an eye.

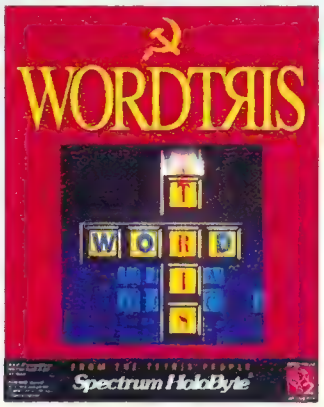
Go for XYLOPHONE if you dare.

Create words horizontally or vertically, but don't put all your E's in one BASKET. Because every time a word lines up, *poof!* those letters disappear, and the blocks below pop up to fill the spaces. So whenever you earn points you stir up the alphabet soup. And suddenly that falling M has no HOME to go to.

WORDTRIS keeps raining vowels and consonants until you've collected enough words to move to the next level, or the well fills up. Of course, each successive round ups the ante as the blocks fall ever faster. But you can choose your difficulty level to match your skills, and select from single player, cooperative, competitive, head-to-head or tournament modes. The built-in 30,000 word dictionary verifies even the most obscure word.

Set the difficulty level at 10 and you'll find WORDTRIS harder to keep up with than the changes in Eastern Europe.

WORDTRIS. Another great game from the TETRIS people.



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energy is unlimited — you can even choose to spread your planet flat on a map or put it on a spinning globe, then from your satellite perspective magnify the sights.

The simulation's eight worlds — *Aquarium*, *Stag Nation*, *Earth: The Cambrian Era*, *Earth: Modern Day*, *Mars*, *Venus*, *Daisyworld Scenario*, and *Random Planet* — test your knowledge of earth science and fire up your creativity. The first three scenarios present relatively easy problems, but they're a great way to become familiar with SimEarth. *Aquarium* is a water world that won't develop sentient life unless you create some inhabitable continents. (In SimEarth even water-based intelligence requires land to develop fire, tools, and forges.) *Stag Nation* is an easy beginner's exercise in which you build a land bridge so that a group of landlocked mammals can reach a larger land mass to develop science and exit the Stone Age. In *Earth: The Cambrian Era*, things start to get interesting. You help develop intelligent life on Earth as you observe the continental drift. You begin 550 million years ago as the supercontinent Pangaea splits into Gondwanaland and Laurasia.

SimEarth hits closer to home in *Earth: Modern Day*. Pollution, the threat of nuclear war, energy shortages, and world hunger are just a few of the familiar problems you'll encounter in this scenario. Your goal is to save us from ourselves. *Mars* and *Venus* require massive terraformation to make these planets fit for colonization. *Daisyworld* re-creates a Lovelock program of the same name, which he used to test his Gaia theory. *Random Planet* poses individual challenges as you use all SimEarth's tools to create your own world from a randomly generated planet.

Love It or Leave It

SimEarth is an ambitious program that's entertaining in its complexity. It may not be suitable for gamers interested in only an evening or even a weekend's worth of fun. But make the commitment and infinite worlds are at your beck and call.

Maxis, Two Theater Square, Suite 230, Orinda, CA 94563, (415) 254-9700; IBM PC, PS/1, PS/2, Tandy, and compatibles; 640K RAM (540K free); DOS 2.1 or higher; Hercules, Tandy, EGA, MCGA, VGA; hard-disk drive with at least 1.5MB free; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster, SoundMaster sound cards, Tandy sound; $69.95

DUCKTALES: THE QUEST FOR GOLD

By Carol Holzberg

Disney goes all out, all the time. From movies to theme parks to television, Disney is a franchise that just won't quit.

A perfect example is DuckTales, one of the hottest cartoons on afternoon TV. Featuring both old and new Disney characters, DuckTales is a fast-paced half-hour that keeps kids glued to the set. Its popularity has spawned everything from a full-length animated movie to thousands of plastic lunchboxes. Now Disney Software brings that same action-packed adventure to the PC screen. Unfortunately, the program is marred by difficult game play and frequent player frustration.

Go for the Gold

DuckTales features six arcade-like challenges at three difficulty levels. You join wealthy Scrooge McDuck and his quacky band of friends — Gyro Gearloose, Fenton Crackshell, and Launchpad McQuack — as they travel around the globe in search of priceless treasures. Nephews Huey, Dewey, and Louie, plus shutterbug buff Webby, tag along to assist. You pit Scrooge against the mean-spirited Flintheart Glomgold for the coveted *Dime* magazine's "Duck of the Year" award. Scrooge has only 30 days to collect more gold than his scheming archrival. The hunt is fraught with perils, and Scrooge needs all the help he can get.

DuckTales takes you on a series of adventures, including a trip through a treasure-packed jungle.

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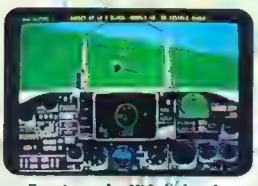

Zero in on the MiG, before he zeros in on you.

Mission accomplished! Now back to Yankee Station to plan your next attack.

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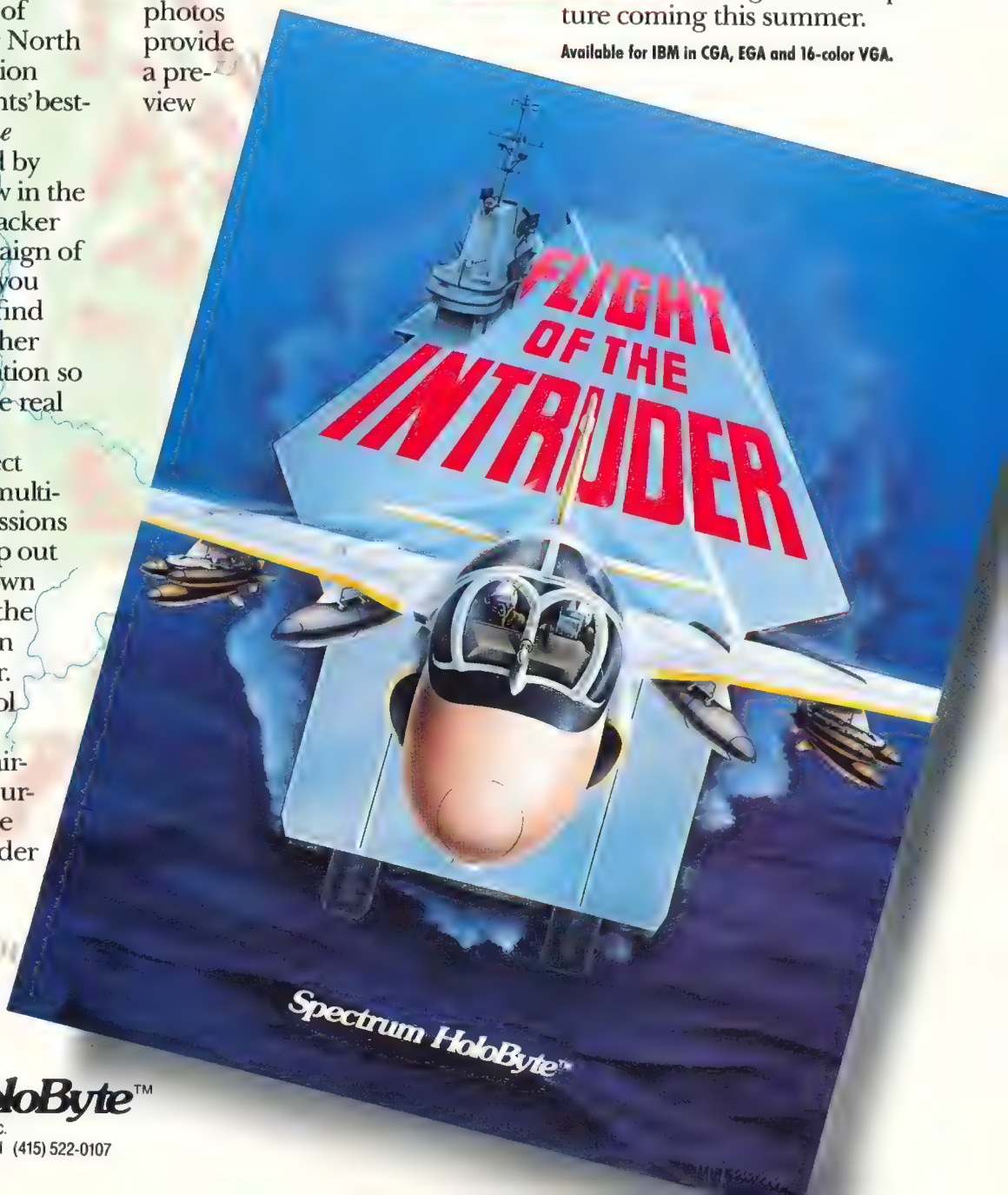

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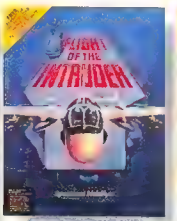

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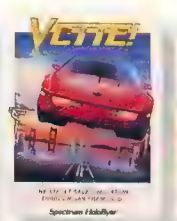

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Play begins in Duckburg, at Scrooge's office. Before embarking on a treasure hunt, you get the chance to study the Stock Market, search for a rare coin in the Money Bin, or decipher Gyro's Super Anti-Spy Security Code, an ingenious but somewhat tedious form of off-disk copy protection. Botch the code-cracking test and you're tossed back to the DOS prompt.

McDuck's treasure map is the key. When you move the map pointer to a treasure location, an electronic atlas reveals important information about the booty, its value, and the travel time required to collect it. Visit the Beri Beri Basin to tie up Titanium Tulips or labor through the Labyrinth of Crete for a prize Duck à l'Orange. There are dozens of spots to investigate. The more places McDuck reaches before time runs out, the better your chances of winning.

But you're not the only one after the gold. Greedy Glomgold wants first digs on the loot, and will do anything to beat Scrooge to the treasure. And cold-hearted Flintheart has hired the notorious Beagle Boys to make mincemeat out of Scrooge and his entourage.

To win, you must learn to pilot Launchpad McQuack's plane in the not-so-friendly Duckburg skies. You have to outmaneuver low-hanging clouds, dangerous rockets, and zooming refrigerators. While practice makes perfect, a successful flight (or safe landing) is no easy task. You'll lose time and valuable cash with every death-defying crash.

All Kinds of Fun

In your search for gold, you'll also help Huey, Dewey, and Louie climb mountains as they sidestep falling boulders, ferocious animals, and duck-squishing anvils hurled by the Beagle Boy bullies. Other adventures set you exploring underground caves and traveling through treasure-laden jungles. You'll wend your way through tunnels, raft down rivers on the backs of hippos, and creep past cat-napping panthers. All kinds of dangers await you, from bottomless pits to tree-dwelling snakes.

Arcade-like amusements make the quest entertaining, if not easy. Superbly animated color graphics images provide a host of cartoon-like visual treats. You even have a choice of joystick or keyboard as you navigate the screens.

Regrettably, DuckTales doesn't take advantage of Disney's outstanding Sound Source technology (reviewed in this issue). Nor does it support the AdLib or SoundBlaster audio cards. Nevertheless, your sound sensibilities won't be disappointed. There are enough special effects to keep you on the edge of your chair throughout the game.

Electronic Duck Soup

DuckTales is fun, but tough to play. Winning is next to impossible, even at the simplest level.

One 10-year-old tester quit in frustration after playing without success for an hour. He complained that neither keyboard nor joystick offered much control over the action. He disliked being given only one chance per round to fly Launchpad's plane. (The cave, jungle, and mountain activities offer three chances.) He wondered why he had to crack Gyro's security code with each new game, even though he never actually exited to DOS.

Adults fare no better. Games are more enjoyable when they don't penalize players for taking time to learn. DuckTales is for the diehard gamester. If you're weak of knee, faint of heart, or light on patience, try applying your gaming talents elsewhere.

Walt Disney Computer Software, 500 South Buena Vista Street, Burbank, CA 91521, (818) 567-5360; IBM PC and compatibles; CGA, EGA, Tandy 16-color; 512K RAM; color monitor; two 5.25-inch drives, one 3.5-inch drive, or one drive and hard disk; off-disk copy protection; $44.95

LIGHTSPEED

By Neil Shapiro

THRIP, THRIP, THWACK! THRIP, THRIP, THWACK!

My starship's spin drive sang a broken song as I limped through the star cluster. Unless I replaced those turbines fast, and the radiator in the main gun, my dreadnought-class ship was going to be a liability instead of an asset. My intuition was right. As a sleek and undamaged Stentor ship suddenly appeared and challenged me on the main screen, I realized that for me the jig was up, the game over. But because Lightspeed is a game to be savored again and again, I knew I'd return to the Hyades Cluster soon. I wouldn't repeat the same mistakes.

Lightspeed is that sort of simulation, a multifaceted game that not only captures your imagination, but also gives you a thrill every time you play. It doesn't wear out its welcome after only a few heavy sessions. Rather, you can easily believe that its universe still somehow exists even when the game disk is in the box, waiting for you to rejoin its electronic reality.

Saving Humanity

It's up to you to make one of two star clusters safe for humanity. You do that by finding a colony world, discovering resources for the colony, and protecting your newfound world against all comers. Sometimes it seems every sentient race in the cluster has its eye on your colony.

You'll practice diplomacy, engage in combat, learn to trade, and master a complex starship. Lightspeed is a sum of many parts, a whole that's believable because of the attention focused on every detail.

Diplomacy proves important as you meet various races. Each has its own agenda, and its own rationale for its actions. Don't sign a peace treaty (it's non-breakable) with the first alien

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race to come along. Some alien goals simply don't jibe with human interests. But diplomacy is necessary, not just to set up alliances, but also to negotiate and trade for the starship components you'll need.

You need these components because of the fortunes of war. As you explore systems for the resources your colony needs, as you search for a habitable world, sooner or later you'll have to fight. The actual joystick action can be fast and furious; combat is full of detailed, quick-moving animation. But in Lightspeed, even combat has many faces.

I AM SELF LUTIN HUNTER. YOU ARE HUMAN WARSHIP PILOT. QUERY INTERCHANGE IS PERMISSABLE? QUERY YOU ARE DESIROUS OF INTERCHANGE?
INTERCHANGE AFFIRMATIVE
INTERCHANGE NEGATIVE
WHAT DOES "INTERCHANGE" MEAN ?
FIGHT
LEAVE

Get ready for some strange conversations when you meet aliens in Lightspeed.

Battle Stations

Once engaged in space combat, you can launch a fighter craft and battle from this smaller, quicker, and weaker craft's controls. Or you can head for the blaster turret of the main spaceship for an unrestricted 360-degree view of the action. Or train your mother ship's main gun on the approaching enemy. The successful captain must constantly switch viewpoints from one cockpit to another to stay alive.

As your craft takes hits, various damage problems rear up, all detailed in schematic diagrams of your ship's systems. At times you must swap hats and become an engineer, then switch to an engine-room view. Colorful symbols of the various devices flash with power or glow dimly in disastrous downtime. Replacing damaged parts of your ship calls for some skill — and some planning. You've got to husband the repair resources you won in combat or obtained in clever trading.

When you run low on engine-room parts, you'd be smart to consult your ship's memory banks. They'll tell you which alien races have the parts you need, how many are stockpiled, and where you'll get the best deal. Just being galactic Top Gun isn't enough in Lightspeed.

The two-star cluster scenarios included with Lightspeed take you from the status of rank beginner just learning the game's basic routines to veteran starship commander skilled in fighting, diplomacy, planning, and trading. It will be a long, long time before this galaxy is safe for humanity. It'll be just as long before you get tired of Lightspeed. This game is sure a winner.

Microprose Software, 180 Lakefront Drive, Hunt Valley, MD 21030, (301) 771-1151; IBM PC AT, PS1/PS2, Tandy 1000, and most compatibles (80286 recommended); 512K RAM (640K for VGA, MCGA); CGA, EGA,VGA, MCGA, Tandy 16-color; two floppy-disk drives or one high-density drive or hard disk; supports Roland MT32, AdLib sound boards; joystick recommended; off-disk copy protection; $59.95

DAS BOOT

By Gregg Keizer

Waters run deep in the North Atlantic, and mistakes make for dead men. That speck in the distance could be just a glint of sun off a cloud, or it could be a British bomber swooping down for the kill. And those sounds in your hydrophone man's ears — just the sea breathing like always, or the far-off screws of an American destroyer?

Das Boot, a World War II submarine simulation that puts you in command of one of Germany's U-boats, taxes your patience and your daring. Without both, you'll fall victim to any number of dangers, from mines and enemy submarines to aircraft and depth-charge-laying convoy escorts.

Although Das Boot can't match the overall realism and complexity of another WWII U-boat simulation — Broderbund's Wolfpack — it still offers some rousing entertainment. You may end up at the bottom more times than not, but you won't go under without a fight.

Achtung, Achtung!

Like most simulations of complex machinery, Das Boot has you run from one station to another to manage everything single-handedly.

"The finest graphics and absolutely the finest scrolling and animation of the year."
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Four Stars, inCider Magazine

BLAST IT!

XENOCIDE
By Brian Greenstone

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Nintendo Magazine

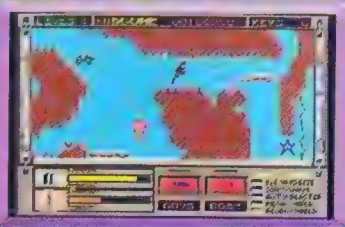
Vicious Xenomorphs occupy the three moons orbiting your home planet. Your mission: destroy the moons and everything on them!

Super-fast action awaits you on three very different moons, each with four nasty levels. But quick reflexes alone won't save you – each level is a tricky puzzle where strategy and tactics will win the day.

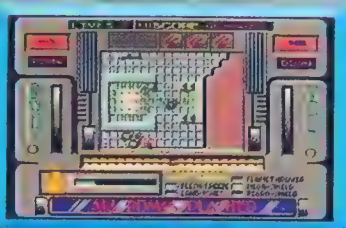
Three different modes of play view (3-D, Profile and Overhead), high-res graphics and superb sound make this game a winner. So lock and load, it's time to commit Xenocide!

Level 1: **Pilot your hovercraft in 3-D view over the moon's surface. Search for the entrance to level two while avoiding the moist SPLAT! of giant bugs against your windshield. Splattered bug juices can block your view and cause you to crash into the moon mountains.**

Level 2: **Wear a jet-pack to fight and finesse your way through a subterranean cavern in profile view. An endless array of creatures and features awaits you. Use a variety of weapons and shields to find the five bombs you need to destroy the moon.**



Level 3: **A scuba dive through hell. You'll need all your fighting skills to ward off the denizens of the deep, and a sharp mind to search out hidden keys required to open doors to passages leading to the level below. Find the keys and get ready for the hard part – finding your way through the correct doors!**



Level 4: **The labyrinth bio-lab. Blast your way through hordes of xenomorphs in overhead view. Figure out the path to the central core, plant your bombs and then fight your way to the teleporter before the moon and it's 'morphs are blown to space dust in a flash of sound and fury on your screen!**

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Whether you're in the control room or up on the bridge, deep in the engine room or up in the bow's torpedo room, you've got more than enough to keep you busy. You have to watch for incoming radio messages, your boat when it's on or under the surface, are more window dressing than enhancements.

Das Boot adds aircraft, a first for WWII submarine simulations, and long overdue, if only because

Undersea adventure comes to your PC wth Das Boot, a World War II submarine simulation.

remember to trim the boat during a dive, set course and speed, and even load torpedo tubes if you want it done fast. This information overload can break you during particularly frenzied action, but normally there's enough time to handle the controls and make decisions. Das Boot's level of realism isn't overwhelming.

Around the World

Five preset missions — from the fjords of Norway and the Arctic Ocean to the North Atlantic, Bay of Biscay, and Straits of Gibralter — test your submariner's skills. You search for enemy shipping, stalk targets, shake off pursuing escorts, flee from buzzing airplanes, and hammer at shore installations with your deck gun. Three levels of difficulty and three different U-boat models add to Das Boot's variations. A few extras, such as external views of airplanes did sink the majority of German submarines. As in the real Battle of the Atlantic, you can slug it out with Allied airplanes with your anti-aircraft guns, or take the safe way out and dive. Only the incredibly stupid submariner thinks he or she can take on airplanes and win, but in Das Boot you can at least shoot down a few.

Several nice touches add to your undersea adventure. You'll occasionally intercept an enemy transmission, and have to puzzle out its code to read it. Torpedoes sometimes strike the target, but don't detonate.

But all's not perfect with this submarine simulation. Das Boot's interface and controls are awkwardly inconsistent. The escape key, for instance, backs you out of only some screens. And if you use it consistently you'll see the game-ending message *Abandon Ship?* all too often. Although the game supports a mouse, you still need to keep fingers on keys to run

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most controls. Most maddening is the lack of a midgame save feature.

Only Five Ways to Die

On a VGA-equipped PC, Das Boot sparkles. Built from 256-color images and filled-polygon shapes, the scenery and ships are recognizable without being overly detailed. Planes flit by, ships explode in flame and smoke, and torpedoes leap from your tubes.

But Das Boot's main failure is its paltry five missions. Even though some are challenging, notably the one that takes you up a twisting (and heavily mined and fortified) Norwegian fjord, five is too few for long play. Das Boot simply isn't compelling enough to make you want to return, again and again, to the same scenarios.

But the thrill of the hunt, and the hunted, rings true nonetheless. For a quick foray into undersea warfare, this meat-and-potatoes-style simulation should be more than satisfying. Just hope your appetite doesn't demand more.

Three-Sixty Pacific, 2105 South Bascom Avenue, Suite 380, Campbell, CA 95008, (408) 879-9144; IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles; 512K RAM; Hercules, CGA, EGA, 256-color VGA, MCGA, Tandy 16-color; supports AdLib, Sound Blaster sound boards, Tandy 3-voice sound; mouse optional; no copy protection; $49.95

JONES IN THE FAST LANE

By Neil Shapiro

How'm I doin'? When you're talking life, the answer may be a bit cloudy. So why wait for reincarnation to find out? Jones in the Fast Lane, a fun and lively game for the PC, keeps score for you in the game of life. No deep Jungian analysis here. Jones in the Fast Lane is, after all, just a computer game. But it's the kind of game that may just teach you something about yourself and your friends — and offer up a major dose of fun at the same time.

Party Time

Jones in the Fast Lane really comes alive as a party game. Playing Jones solitaire against the built-in opponent is fun, but only as a way to practice. The real fun comes when you play with a group of friends — four can play at a time, more can kibitz from the back row — especially as the joshing and joking back and forth gets going.

Each player first sets goals to achieve during the game. Goals involve living your computer-simulated life well enough to meet your aims in four areas: happiness, career, wealth, and education. And just as in life, these goals quickly become interrelated and dependent on each other.

Once goals are set, play moves to the game board. In Jones in the Fast Lane, the word *board* rather than *screen* is really appropriate: This game is played on a video board in which you move from square to square, containing locales such as a fast-food restaurant, a school, a pawn shop, a bank, a factory, an apartment building, an appliance store, a rental office, and other similar places from real life.

But when you land on a square in Jones, you won't mistake the results for a paper board game. Each square comes to life with choices, and even animated faces that engage you in conversation and witty (well, almost witty) repartee.

Starting from Scratch

A typical game may see you set out to build up your finances so you can feed your face at the fast-food restaurant and your mind at the local college. Of course, when you begin a job without either work experience or work history, expect that high-paying jobs will be few and far between. Save your money, work hard, get some schooling, and some of the well-paying positions will open up for you.

As you kill time by perusing the list of job offerings in the employment

Animated faces regale you with sometimes-witty conversation in Jones in the Fast Lane.

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agency, remember that your opponents are doing many of the same things. If one of your opponents decides to go to trade school, for instance, you might want to pursue a more liberal education. Players' paths in Jones in the Fast Lane diverge quickly: No one plan, no one strategy, is right for everyone. A lot depends not only on luck, but on how and when decisions are made. This game really drives home the old cliché of not putting the cart before the horse, and of making sure you've planned your life. It'll echo in your head before you're through.

Long-Winded Play

Although much of Jones in the Fast Lane is fast-paced and lively — from its cartoony graphics images to its make-you-dance sound effects — the game can get a bit repetitive and long, especially when you play by yourself. A three-hour game, for example, is about the average length for the default goal points set for each player. Jones in the Fast Lane has a tough time holding your interest that long when you play solitaire. Of course, games of only a half hour are possible if you shoot for less stratospheric goals.

Jones in the Fast Lane won't appeal to everyone who plays it. But for those of you who enjoy simulations based on real life or for those who are lucky enough to have some real-life friends who want to join in the fun of playing a game, Jones in the Fast Lane can be more than just a quick turn around the game board of life.

Sierra On-Line, P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614, (800) 326-6654; IBM PC, Tandy, MS-DOS compatibles; 8MHz or faster processor recommended; 512K RAM required (640K for VGA, MCGA); EGA, VGA, MCGA, Tandy 16-color; hard-disk drive recommended; supports Roland MT32, AdLib, Sound Blaster, Game Blaster sound boards; joystick or mouse recommended; $39.95

RED BARON

By Bernie Yee

For all you know, flight began atop a dragon in SSI's Dragonstrike and went right on to the 25th century in Origin's Wing Commander. That's the problem with computer games — they give you a skewed picture of reality.

The real art of flying — combat flying in which planes jinked across the sky and aces fought like mad dogs in the air — began in 1914, World War I, the Great War. Dogfighting was discovered by the pilots, who during that war's four years flew wood and fabric crates — fragile aircraft with an engine and machine gun up front and not much more behind them. Now, Dynamix offers a taste of WWI aerial combat in its best-selling Red Baron. By far the most graphically stunning WWI-period flight simulator, Red Baron puts you in the cockpit as you fly against German, English, and French aces. You may even meet the man for whom this game is named — Manfred von Richthofen, the Red Baron.

Those Incredible Men

Each cockpit in Red Baron is painstakingly rendered, down to the wood grain of your instrument panel and the splintered struts that barely survive the dogfight. No modern heads-up display here — just the enemy ace's heads-up flying and superb marksmanship. This is dogfighting for the purist — scrambling, improvising, planning, stalking. After enough bullets thunk into an enemy airplane, you'll see trailing smoke. Shoot down a Zeppelin and you'll watch in awe as it goes up in an orange-and-red-and-white explosion of hydrogen — drama fit for the ending of Star Wars, or at least Wing Commander.

Red Baron is a 256-color VGA graphics wonder (a 16-color version is available for slower or less well-

equipped PCs) that shows you filled-polygon representations of each fighter in full camera-controlled 3-D, from the Red Baron's Fokker Triplane to Eddie Rickenbacker's Spad. In combat, the fighters look like they're supposed to — Richthofen's craft is red, with a big German cross on the wings. Flying into a cloud bank or looking into the sun impairs your visibility; the former looks like someone put a cloud across your monitor, while the latter puts a yellow sheen on the screen that hides enemy planes lurking in your blind spot. It's hard to tell whether effects are digitized, but they sure sound great. Machine guns chatter, bullets strike home, and engine noises nearly drown out everything else.

You can choose from a variety of missions, from tackling a famous ace to shooting down observation balloons or Zeppelin airships. You can also fly in an ongoing campaign, starting from three periods in the War, and even win medals if you're good enough. Best of all, you can fine-tune Red Baron's difficulty level so that you won't get too discouraged at the start.

You can fly alone or with up to four wingmen. They'll fly along with you in formation, happy to shoot at anything that crosses their paths. Each real-life ace has his own quirks and habits in combat, so he'll fly the way he really did in WWI. You'll have to recognize each ace's sometimes strangely marked aircraft and exploit his unique flying tactic — which is no easy task.

Red Baron is filled with digitized images of men and their machines, giving it an authentic, historical flavor. Add an impressive VCR playback feature and you've got enough flexibility to keep you in the skies for hours, days, maybe even weeks. You can record to disk every moment of your mission, then play back that mission from your choice of several exterior or interior camera angles. Best of all, you can advance your VCR frame by frame, then pick up and fly your mission again from that point, letting you play "what if" games. What if I did an Immelmann instead of a barrel roll right before Boelcke blew away my fuselage?

This game's documentation is no slouch, either. It packs game-play instructions, tactical flying hints, WWI history, the biographies of the aces into an easily readable form.

Red Baron: Customize standard missions to make mincemeat of the enemy or make your job even tougher.

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And Their Flying Machines

Red Baron is easy to learn, but tough to master. There aren't many controls you'll need to get used to, so you'll be handling your plane in minutes. But there are myriad maneuvers to memorize and weather conditions to adapt to before you can come close to matching the aces' flying styles and talents.

If you want to fly during a time when every plane practiced stealth (because there was no radar), Red Baron's your game, and maybe your man — if you're good enough to bring him down.

Dynamix (a Sierra company), P.O. Box 485, Coarsegold, CA 93614, (800) 326-6654); IBM PC and compatibles; 640K RAM; minimum 10MHz microprocessor speed; VGA (separate 256- and 16-color versions available); supports Roland, AdLib, Sound Blaster sound boards; off-disk copy protection; $59.95

TIMEQUEST

By Peter Olafson

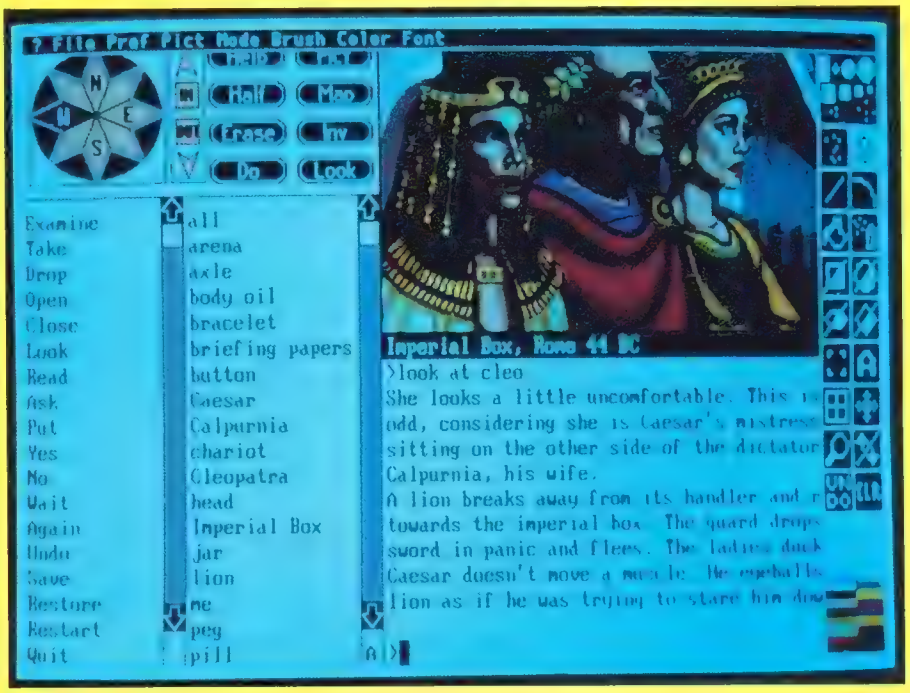
There's a lovely and poignant moment shortly after the start of TimeQuest — or 2134 years before it begins, depending on your perspective.

Back in Rome in 44 B.C., a little off the beaten track, you'll find a green and empty park with a worn bench. Before long, a sad, soft little tune drifts in from nowhere, speaks its peace, and just as quietly drifts out again. Not much later (unless you've made yourself busy), you'll learn that Julius Caesar is dead — killed by a lion, not an assassin's knife. The city seems shocked into numbness.

This gentle and sobering interlude is typical of the beauty that graces this second in a series of next-generation text-and-graphics adventures from Legend. TimeQuest easily evokes memories of such long-dead software as Infocom's A Mind Forever Voyaging, but seems tempered by more modern time-travel expeditions, such as Where in Time Is Carmen Sandiego?.

EZ Time Travel

Lieutenant Zeke Vettenmeyer is one sick individual. He's gone back in time and changed ten critical historical events. In Rome, for instance, he's arranged for Caesar to die in an accident a month before he would have been stabbed by assassins. This post-Caesar Rome isn't divided by the power struggle that followed the assassination, and so may never fall.



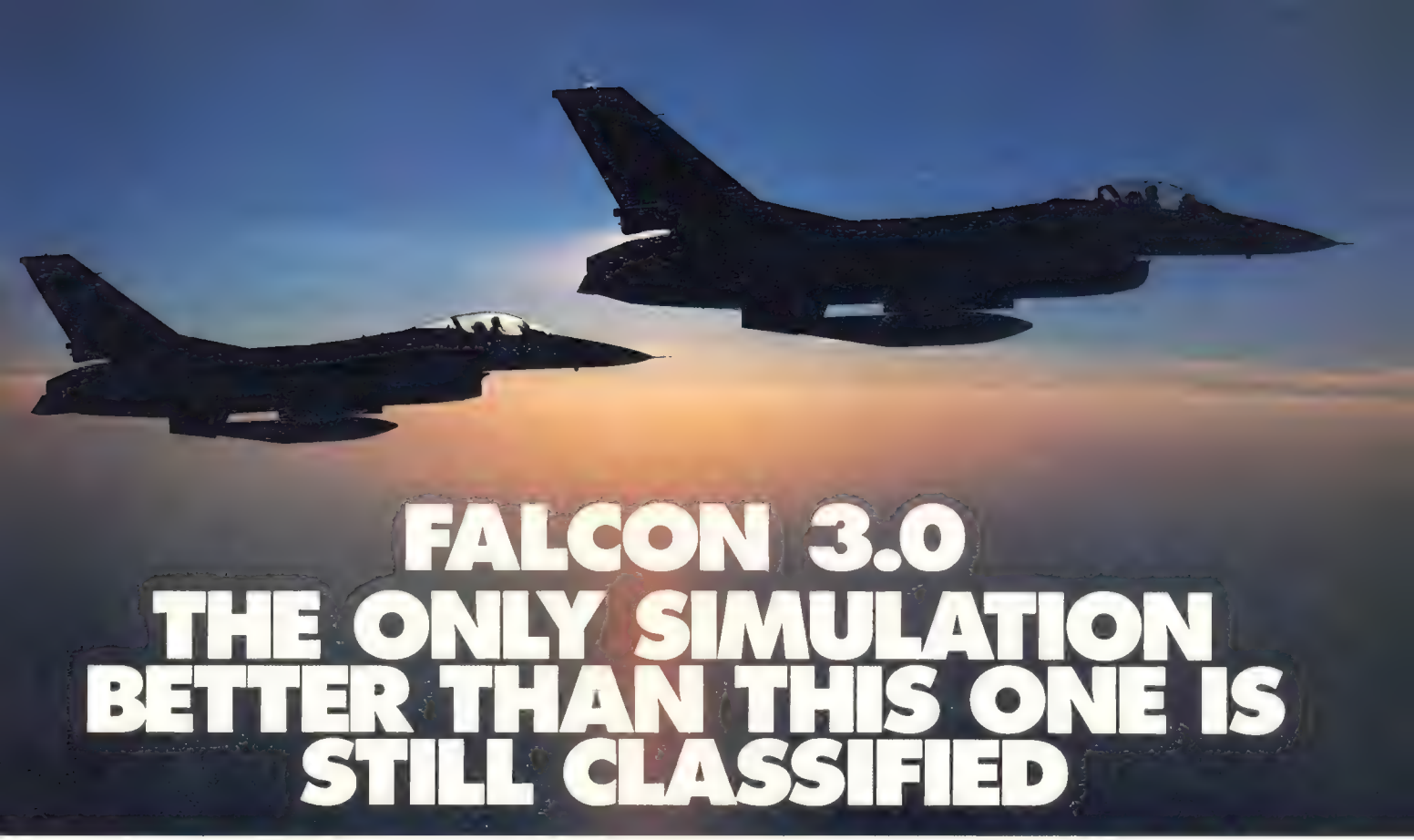
TimeQuest takes you to nine different moments in an altered past.

Beginning in the year 2090, you, as a private in the Temporal Corps, must follow Vettenmeyer to six locations and nine time periods via a contraption called the Interkron, repair the time rifts he's created, and track him down. Each of these missions is described in the briefing papers that accompany the game.

Vettenmeyer may want to destroy Life As We Know It, but he apparently also wants to be caught, for he's strewn obtuse clues and riddles through time. If he outwits you — and he may, for TimeQuest is never quite easy, and is sometimes quite wickedly hard — history pursues the rotten course he's set it on, and your efforts come to no good end. (You might ask how the game takes place at all with the past so twisted, but if you start dabbling in paradoxes, you'll never crack the shrinkwrap.)

TimeQuest author (and Legend president) Bob Bates wrote two latter-day Infocom adventures — Sherlock Holmes: The Riddle of the Crown Jewels and Arthur: The Quest for Excalibur — and brings to this adventure much of the same lively and intelligent sensibility exhibited in those games. He's equally adept at breezy, colorful writing (try collecting the sludge in Rome's sewers or examining a bush for minor examples) and more elegant, classical prose. He's having a good time with his story, and, for the most part, it shows. (The parser often returns inventive responses.)

TimeQuest's graphics window,



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You and your wingman begin the attack, deep behind enemy lines.

... Nearly blacked out, you ease forward on the stick. The g's drop, and you can see again. There he is! You're on HIS six now. This is going to be sweet. As you get tone you know he's yours.

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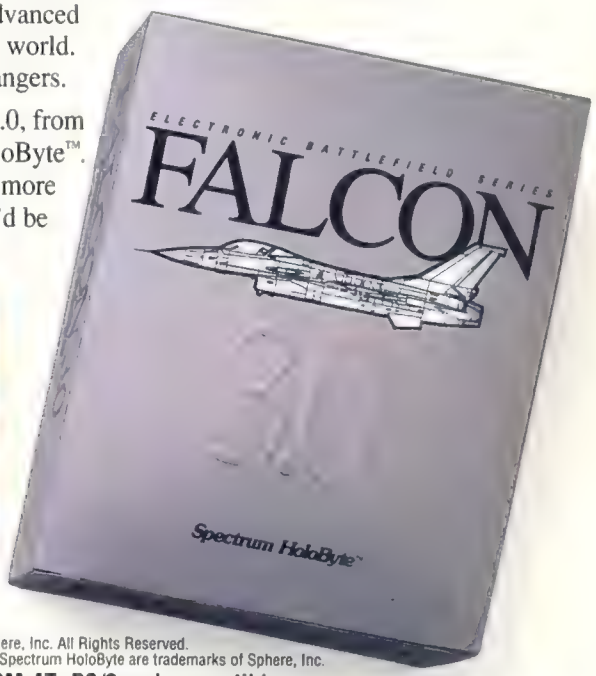

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on-screen maps, mouse-driven interface, and context-sensitive noun list make this adventure role-playing game easy to use, something especially important if you tend (as I do) to type *timset* instead of *timeset* five times straight while running the time machine.

As in Spellcasting 101, Legend's first game, TimeQuest's graphics images are high-resolution EGA — but it's very good high-resolution EGA, close enough to VGA that the difference isn't worth mentioning. They usually contain subtle, and delightful, animation. Part of the fun is watching how places change over time. A tavern in Dover — it's there even in the Bronze Age — goes through several architectural incarnations, but the bartender's always the same bloke.

TimeQuest also makes excellent use of both the AdLib synthesizer — there's lots of beefy, substantial music — and of RealSound, which is used for effects and speech. And the copy protection is a pleasantly transparent routine that requires you to repair the Interkron the first time you give it a spin.

Sherman, to the Wayback Machine

I like TimeQuest. Yet the time-travel theme is a bit stale, and the game lacks a strong center. None of these worlds is that substantial, and the game occasionally feels like History McNuggets, popping around from one sliver of civilization to the next.

TimeQuest also has a certain strain of obviousness. It typically tells you, rather than shows you, what has happened in a given world. It would be nice to discover these things for yourself. For that matter, Vettenmeyer's time tampering should have been integrated into the storyline, rather than simply laid out in the instructions.

But as it is, TimeQuest is definitely fun — for the mind, for the eye, and for the ear. The appeal of the text adventure, like that little Roman park with the forlorn melody, has hardly changed. Some things are just timeless.

Legend Entertainment, 14200 Park Meadow Drive, Chantilly, VA 22021, (703) 222-8500; IBM PC, Tandy, and compatibles; 512K RAM; CGA, EGA, MCGA, VGA, Tandy 16-color; supports RealSound and AdLib, Roland sound boards; mouse optional; $59.95

SOUND MASTER II

By Barry Brenesal

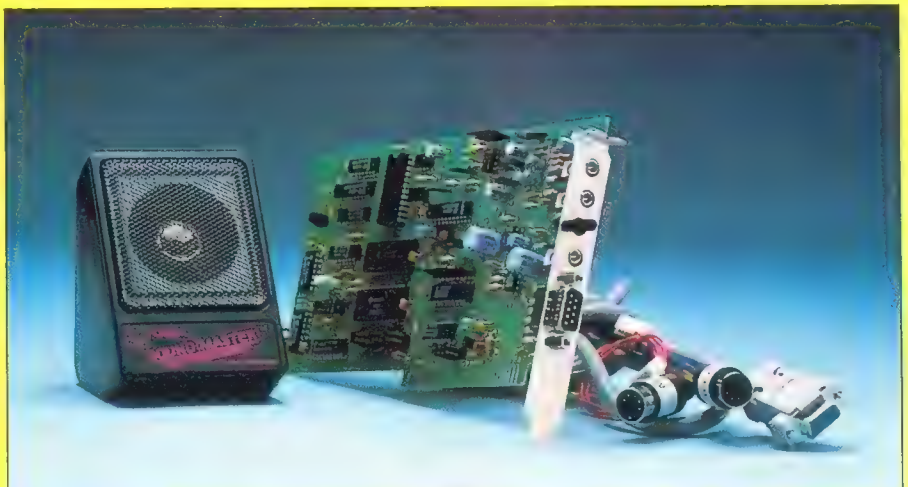
Silent pictures may be quaint, but there's no substitute for movies that rock 'n' roll with music to get you in the mood and sound effects to grab your ears. So it is with PC games. Good electronic entertainment depends on sound and music to make you feel part of the action, and part of an imaginary world. No wonder, then, that sound boards are often the first add-on gamers pop into their PCs.

A new entry in the sound-board sweepstakes, Covox's Sound Master II, hopes to snare part of those gaming dollars. Its claims are impressive: 100 percent AdLib and high Sound Blaster compatibility, a MIDI interface, digital sound recording and playback, speech synthesis, and voice recognition, for starters. Unfortunately, Sound Master II doesn't live up to its expectations as a gaming card, and even falls short on several basic features.

Night of the Setup

Sound Master II setup can be a dream or a nightmare. Assuming its preset configuration creates no conflicts with other boards in your computer, everything is fine and you're ready to go in a snap. But if the SM2TEST program (included in the package) reports problems, that ease of installation turns downright ugly.

The documentation and testing software are no help here. They suggest changing the jumper settings (plugs that connect different sets of wires) on the Sound Master II card, but don't tell you which jumpers. If you're adventurous, you can choose any four of the 16 available — and hope for the best. That's more than just frustrating, though, because the wrong combination of jumper choices can potentially fry the board, maybe even damage other components of your PC. I know from personal experience; I lost a Super VGA card not long ago because of just such a conflict.



Sound Master II's impressive range of features is marred by poor documentation and difficult setup.

Sound Master II also asserts that it can intercept audio signals to the PC's internal speaker, adding volume controls and improving the sound results of any game that uses it. I could never get this feature to work, even though my PC's case-mounted internal speaker matches Covox's briefly stated requirements, even though I braved the unknown and followed the instructions to simply reverse the jumper plug (turn it around, in other words) if no sound results.

This casual approach to information carries over to Sound Master II's peripherals and software. Consider VMKEY (*Voice Master Key*), the enclosed voice-recognition program that lets you add voice control to any program, games included. Sound good? It's listed as abridged on the box, but you have to read the small print before you realize that "abridged" translates to "cannot save voice commands to disk." So though you can speak words such as *pass* and *pause* while running VMKEY, you can't save them for moments when they're most needed, while battling alien hordes or demon throngs, for instance.

Compatibility Is Cool

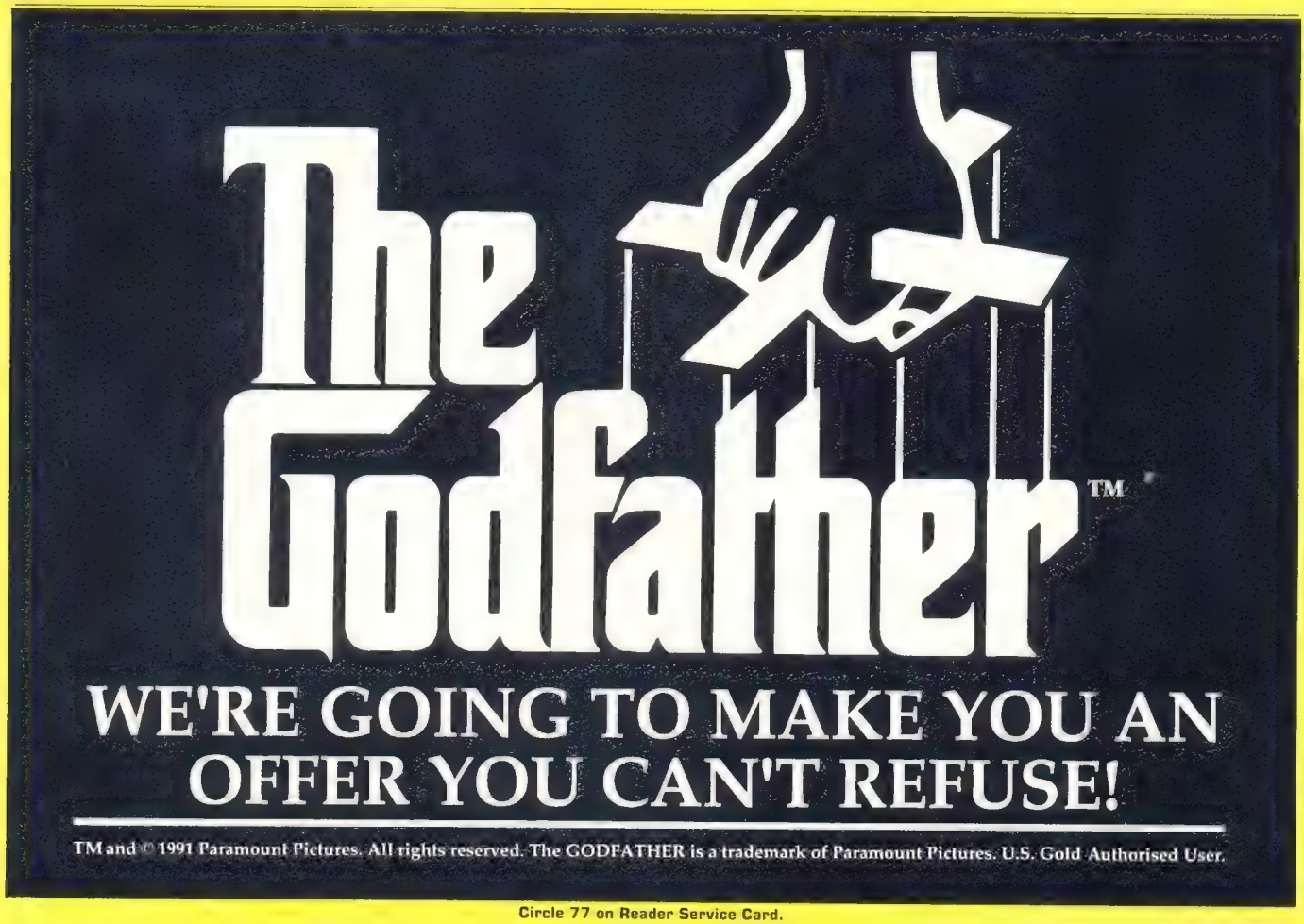
Sound Master II delivers when it comes to compatibility. Fifteen AdLib-compatible games pushed out sound through the board without a problem. Sound Master II also runs uncompressed sound files recorded with Sound Blaster, though you have to rename them to run properly. Distortion is very low, as you'd expect when a mono signal is fed through two speakers, rather than half a stereo signal through each speaker.

And that's Sound Master II's greatest drawback as a gaming card. It can't reproduce a stereo signal, except by changing it to mono. So far, only a few games have taken advantage of stereo sound effects (most notably, SSI's Eye of the Beholder), but as PC games strive to beat cartridge video and look ahead to the time when they'll have to compete with CD-ROM and CDI (*compact-disc interactive*) technology, expect to see, and hear, more stereo games in the very near future.

The chatter of machine guns or the thud of footsteps off to your left could mean the difference between life and death for your alter ego. You wouldn't risk game lives for lack of a high-resolution monitor, a fast joystick, or a sound board with good stereo imaging, would you? Mono sound just doesn't cut it, not in the '90s.

Thumbs down on Sound Master II, then. In the market for a game card? Stick with AdLib or Sound Blaster, two proven standards in computerized sound reproduction. ❑

Covox, 675 Conger Street, Eugene, OR 97402, (503) 342-1271; 256K RAM; DOS 3.0 or later; one available 8-bit slot; $229.95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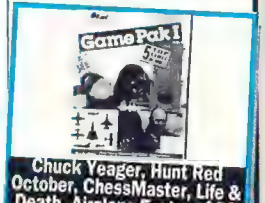

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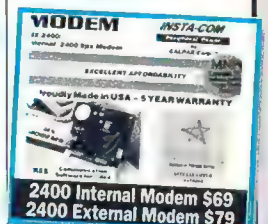

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IF YOU DON'T SEE IT, GIVE US A CALL!

PLAYING THE GAME

The Pen Is Mightier

By Neil Shapiro

Mail! That's what we have — about a ton of it. It's been a long time between columns, and many of you have written in to share your hints and tips. In fact, response has been so good the Post Office demanded that I spring for a larger mailbox. But, hey, it's worth it.

Going for the Gold

The long-distance correspondence award goes to Irsha Hussain, who writes to us from Karachi, Pakistan, "near the Mehboob flour mill." Irsha offers a complete walkthrough and hint treasury he designed for **Gold Rush**.

If you've ever wondered how to get a perfect score in the venerable game Gold Rush, it turns out to be easy after all. After you meet your brother at game's end, use your pickax to get at the gold behind the wall. After a while the hole gets bigger and, naturally, you go through it and win. But to earn extra points, just hold your horses: You can use your pick on that recalcitrant wall more than 50 times, racking up extra points for your final score.

Irsha asks what our rules are for accepting hints for publication. In short, if your hint is something that other game aficionados might not discover easily on their own through regular play, send it in (see the address at the end of the column) and it may show up in a future installment.

The Ultimate Bag?

Ultima VI may be a bit easier to play thanks to the following hint from Marc P. Syp of South Burlington, Vermont. He's discovered that you can hold unlimited items in an empty bag. The trick is to open the bag first and ask to see the contents. Once you're looking at whatever's inside, you can pick up anything your strength allows and carry it along with you. Marc reports he even bagged a skiff successfully this way.

Marc also mentions that the hint book for Ultima VI is well done. (We agree.) It doesn't give the game away. Detailed maps are included (for those of us who break out in a rash when we see graph paper), but many of the hints are written in a "prophecy" style that's fun on its own. Of course, as with all hint books, you'll be paying extra to get the inside scoop.

Commanding Clues

Jeff Wilmarth of Iowa City, Iowa, shares some dynamite clues to **Wing Commander** that will help you dust more than a few of the Kralthi kitties off your monitor. His first clue was hard to believe — until I tried it and saw just how right he was. The safest speed at which to travel through an asteroid belt is the maximum cruise speed of your fighter (360 to 450 kps, depending on the ship). Likewise, the safest speed through a minefield is top speed — even adding your afterburners. Not only is it fun, the animation is incredible.

Jeff also points out that when you attack capital ships "it's best to knock off all but one of the fighter escorts first. Then, while your wing man is keeping the remaining fighter busy, you can bag the big prize easily."

In the final mission, it's even more important for you, and not your wing man, to get that last capital ship. If your wing man destroys it, you can kiss the Medal of Valor goodbye. As Jeff also points out, however (and my own experimentation proves him right), you don't get the Medal of Valor if your wing man survives the final mission along with you, either. Well, as the saying goes, you have to break a few eggs to make an omelet.

Their Finest Clues?

Shane Biller of Stoughton, Wisconsin, clues us in on some great strategies and techniques for playing **Their Finest Hour**. Shane points out that LucasFilm left one of the most important commands off the reference card. Sure, it's in the manual, but, hey, I don't read those things either. The command is *T*, and you can use it to speed up long, boring flights.

Shane has also come up with an exciting strategy for the German power in the campaign: "Start your bombers at an airbase in France while positioning your fighters just off the coast of Britain (near the target). This will give you ample time to wipe out the opposing fighters before the bombers arrive. Don't land or press quit before the bombers have made their run — or you won't get credit for destroying any bases."

Bucking the System

Alex Boyko of Springfield, Virginia, writes, "I had an answer to one of my questions published in a recent issue of *PCGames*. I wonder if I could pass along a tip in return?" Alex's hint involves **Buck Rogers** and should help you put the stars back in your eyes during your next gaming session: "The most difficult enemy you'll meet in Buck Rogers," Alex writes, "is the robotic spider-like creature. It shoots missiles that can

devastate your party. To counter the threat, there are two particular things you need to do.

"First, everyone should have needle or bolt guns. Second, surround the robot with people from your party. That way, if it launches a missile, the blast will hurt the robot, too. Surrounding the robot often forces it to use its less-effective needle gun."

MARVELous Clues

I collect comic books, and I'll bet that Erik Jayne of Redford, Wisconsin, does, too. Erick shares some techniques he uses in two games based on Marvel comic-book characters. The games are already fun, but the following hints will help you get into the action even sooner.

In **Dr. Doom's Revenge**, throw your shield at the Rhino and go low to minimize your damage. The key to offing the Robotic Gorilla is to dance in and hit him once when he's close, then quickly two-step your way out of there. Keep doing this and you should survive.

Spider Man has always been one of my favorite characters. (I'm old enough to remember reading him when he didn't much like Mary Jane Watson.) **Spider Man** on the PC captures many of the elements of the biff-bam-boom fights for which our superhero's famous.

Erick hints that when Spidey's facing the bombs that go up and down the screen, don't move. Wait until the first bomb gets to the bottom of the screen and then flip forward twice. Timing, after all, is everything in an arcade game.

Here's another tip on timing: When you know that a robot will follow a villain, you can avoid fighting. If you take your time with the villain and prolong that action long enough, the robot may not make an appearance. With personalities like those, who needs 'em?

A New Rotation

I'd like to tell you about a impressive new game I've been playing here at HQ. It's called **Rotox**, from U.S. Gold. What makes Rotox special is a new form of animation it employs.

The game's description sounds pretty run-of-the-mill. You're a cyborg dropped into the middle of a base full of enemies. BAM! You have to shoot your way out. Ho-hum? No way. You view the game's action from the top down. The base is structured as a complex with moving floors and shapes. When you rotate your little cyborg, the entire screenful of graphics images rotates around, producing a sensational sweeping visual effect.

Each level is different, composed of a variety of

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Strategic Simulations Inc.
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VGA (640K)
DOS 2.0 or higher
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Dr. Doom's Revenge
MicroProse Software
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Hunt Valley, MD 21030
(301) 771-1151
$34.95
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and compatibles
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P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
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Rotox
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San Jose, CA 95128
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sublevels or rooms. A graphics readout on each level shows you the locations of all the rooms in relation to your position and whether you've cleared each one. But moving from room to room can be tough. For example, you'll encounter rotating gangplanks you'll have to walk, trying to match your own spin to theirs to avoid falling into space.

The first level is none too easy, either. One thing I finally noticed is that the deadly gun turrets have a weakness that isn't obvious at first. Your own built-in gun (you get more powerful weapons as you find them) has a slightly longer range than the turrets'. We're talking a matter of pixels here, which is why it's easy to miss and get creamed over and over by those high-powered enemy gun emplacements.

When you face a turret, inch forward very carefully, firing each time you move. If you don't overdo your forward movement you should find a safe spot where you can hit the turret without getting touched. Of course, in a situation where you're facing any number of turrets, you'll have to pay strict attention to your positioning and take all of them into account.

Rotox offers ten levels of play in all. Some of the higher ones test not only your arcade reflexes, but also your capacity for puzzle solving. This isn't a game you'll quickly retire to your shelf. Both the graphics and the advanced game play will hold your attention for a long time.

At first, I thought the game suffered because of its lack of joystick support — it's keyboard-controlled only. But after a few hours of frantic play, I'm convinced that U.S. Gold made the right choice. The keyboard is exact in letting you execute your movements on the spinning, rotating field; a joystick would probably be too sloppy. But expect to spend an hour or so getting comfortable with the controls — unless you're one of those people who prefers using the keyboard in all games.

The only other caveat is that if you don't like look-it-up-in-the-manual copy protection, this may not be for you. Thirty different icons can show up on the start-up protection screen and they can be difficult to spot in the manual. But if PC game players would see the obvious effects of software piracy, companies like U.S. Gold wouldn't have to protect their products with such methods.

Well, that's about it for this month. It won't be as long between columns this time, and I'm looking forward to hearing from you. If you have a hint, a tip, or a technique to share, please send it along to "Playing the Game," c/o Neil Shapiro, P.O. Box 520, Bethpage, NY 11714. ❑

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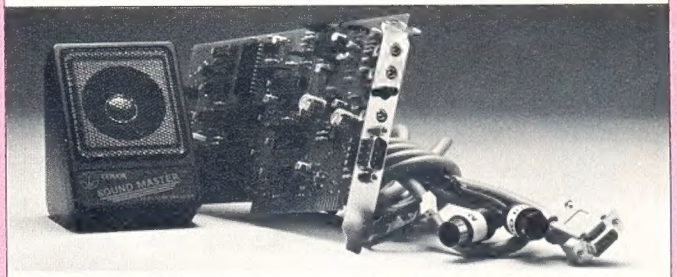

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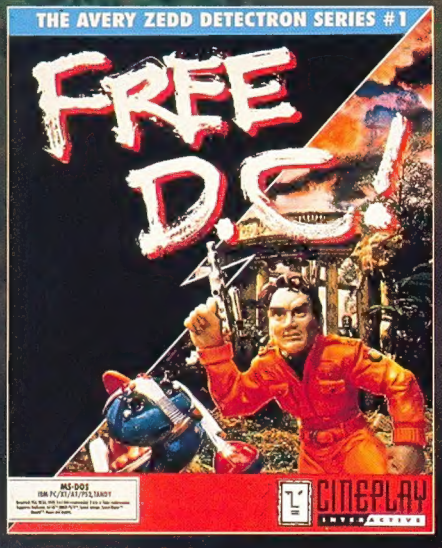

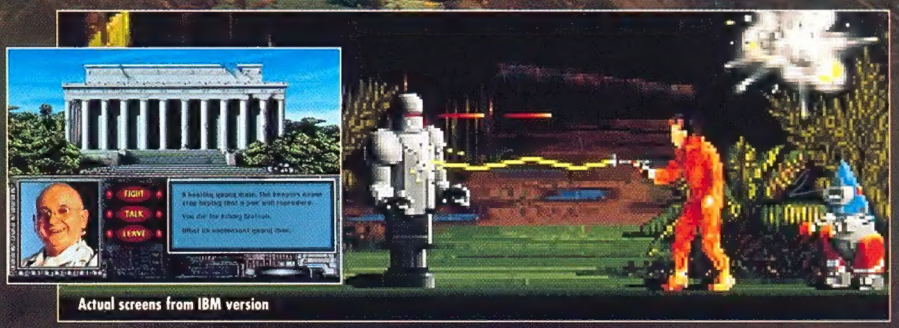

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